

Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators

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Abstract

This project is aligned with examining the role of the education system and the foster care context on the learning experiences of young children in the classroom. This project is a study of the literature and research conducted on the life experiences, adverse effects of these experiences (such as attachment disorder), socioemotional development, and resiliency of foster care children. Furthermore, the project explores the literature on how the experiences of these foster children traverse contexts and impact the education setting. This study also outlines specific strategies and practices for teachers and school staff in order to promote students' resiliency, competency, behaviour management, and overall educational success and positive academic experience. These strategies resulted from a critical review of the literature and translated into the development of an informative handbook intended for teachers. The handbook developed in this study focuses on the understanding of the lives of foster care children, their histories, adverse experiences, socioemotional development, strategies to manage behaviour, unique needs, and encouraging their resiliency and success in school. To ensure the soundness of the handbook, 2 education liaisons at a Family and Child Services agency within Ontario and a former child and service social worker from Manitoba reviewed the first draft and provided comments on the validity of the content and the potential usability of the handbook for educators. Suggestions and comments provided by these experts were used to enhance the final product of the handbook.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

A foster child is a child looked after temporarily or brought up by people other than his or her biological or adoptive parents. Foster children tend to have unique histories and often challenges that increase their risk of social, emotional, and educational struggles.

Children in foster care represent a population with specific needs resulting from their prior trauma, risk for adverse outcomes, and need for mental health care (Jee et al., 2010). Most children in foster care have experienced early childhood trauma including child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and impaired parenting, placing them at risk for long-term negative health and emotional outcomes (Felitti et al., 1998).

Gustavsson and MacEachron (2012) state that “foster children are at an elevated risk for a number of negative educational outcomes: low graduation rates, special education enrollment, grade retention, school behavioral problems, poor academic performance, behavioral health challenges, and school mobility” (p. 83). It is for these reasons that I believe it is crucial for teachers to be informed and supported on how to address the unique needs of foster care children in their classrooms. Teachers, along with the education system as a whole, play an integral role in supporting the foster child in direct and indirect ways. Directly, teachers can have a lasting positive impact on the lives and education of foster care children by acting as positive role models, working to create positive attachment bonds, and accommodating and meeting the needs of these children. Indirectly, by taking the time to educate themselves on the lives and needs of foster care children and implement what they learn in their everyday teaching practices, educators can promote positive attachment, socioemotional development, and resiliency in children.

With half a million children in care, most of whom are of school age (71%), it is imperative that the educational outcomes for these children improve (“National Working Group on Foster Care and Education”, 2008).

This project critically examined the literature related to foster children and school functioning. The goal of the research study was to create a profile of the foster child, adverse backgrounds, outline attachment disorder, socioemotional development, resiliency, specific needs, behavioural management strategies, and school performance and success in regards to foster children, ultimately providing information and teaching strategies for teachers and other school staff to help these children have a positive academic experience. The compiled information and teaching strategies will be included in a handbook, entitled *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators*. This handbook will help inform teachers on how to address the unique needs of a foster child while at the same time emphasizing the child’s need of care and support. Classroom teachers need to be provided with insights into specific risks, strategies and awareness when teaching a foster child. Teachers play an important role in giving foster children a positive academic experience; therefore it is crucial that they are prepared to meet the unique needs of this student in their classroom.

Statement of the Problem

Foster children tend to have higher rates of attachment disorders, elevated incidences of behavioural and mental illnesses, socioemotional development problems, and lower rates of school success than their non-foster-care peers (Gustavsson & MacEachron, 2012). Resulting from frequent placement and school changes, foster care children can face the often-common destiny of slipping through the cracks of the

education system, ultimately lowering their chances of success in the future. However, with a focus on building resiliency in children in care, these children potentially would have a greater chance at succeeding in school. By building social skills, competency, motivation, and resiliency, foster children would be equipped with the tools they need to combat the adversity they unwillingly experience and potentially mitigate short-and long-term adversity effects.

Currently, a gap exists between foster children's needs for accommodations and effective teaching strategies and teachers' actual awareness, knowledge, and preparation (Zetlin, Weinberg, and Shea, 2006a). While conducting a critical review of the research, it was noted that most teachers are not providing foster care students with appropriate instruction, care, accommodations, and expectations. Anecdotally, as a student teacher, I noticed that many teachers see foster children as temporary students in their classroom as a result of their frequent placements and school disruptions. This teacher perception of foster children as "transient" students needs to be addressed, as teachers are very important role models and influential adults in the lives of foster children.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate and critically evaluate the relevant literature available on the foster care system and foster care children. Additionally, the research explored the crucial role of the education system and teachers in the lives of foster children. The purpose of this study was to collect important and relevant information to develop an informative handbook for elementary educators concerning foster children. The handbook was based on the exploration of the backgrounds, disorders, behaviour issues, socioemotional development, school performance, and

specific needs of a foster child and ultimately what teachers can do to improve the resiliency and academic experiences of these children in their classrooms.

I collated and synthesized background information of foster care and foster children with the target audience of teachers and other adults in the school community in mind. I investigated the literature on what teachers can do to address the unique needs of a foster child while at the same time how teachers can more effectively manage the behaviours of these children in their classrooms. This information will potentially assist teachers in gaining an understanding of the efficacy of specific classroom strategies and specialized knowledge that meet the needs of foster children. This research also determined the specific role a teacher can play in giving that child a positive academic experience. An informative handbook was created for teachers who have foster children in their classrooms that is based on a critical review of the literature, the professional advice of two education liaisons from a Family and Child Services agency in Ontario and a family and child services worker from Manitoba.

Importance of the Study

The development of a handbook which focuses on information and strategies when working with a foster care child is crucial for educators in today's school system. Teachers require a basic understanding of the common adverse histories of foster children, their socioemotional development, as well as attachment disorders and behavioural issues that may stem from those histories. This basic information will inform effective strategies, teaching methods, and behaviour management techniques so that foster children can have a positive educational experience. A proactive approach to

teaching foster children is central to mitigating some of the negative effects of foster children's lives and preventing the often-negative experiences in school.

Teachers may not feel confident in addressing the needs of this unique student population. The handbook is intended to empower educators with knowledge common to many foster children regarding their history, behavioural, attachment, and socioemotional development issues. Additionally, educators using the handbook will be provided with guidance in how to positively impact foster children's performance in school and future success.

Research Questions

The critical review of the literature addressed several research questions, namely:

(a) Who is a foster child, and what common experiences have they faced before being placed into foster care? (b) What potential risks do foster children face in terms of attachment, socioemotional development, and behavioural issues? (c) What is the role of the teacher and education system in the lives of foster children, and in what ways can teachers improve the academic experience of foster care children?

Scope and Limitations of the Study

In this study, data were collected from two main sources. First, a critical review of the literature was conducted in order to establish a need for the handbook and to determine the information about foster children, their histories, development, and their experiences in school. The literature reviewed was gathered from peer-reviewed educational journals, pamphlets, and teaching and parenting books. Further, two education liaisons from a Family and Child Services agency in Ontario, and one former Child and Family Services supervisor from Manitoba reviewed the content of the

handbook and commented on the appropriateness and made suggestions for improving the handbook.

The study is limited in that the literature reviewed for this project was mainly focused in the United States. It can only be assumed that much of the research reflects foster children in Canada because of the overall similarities of the two countries. The project is also limited by the small number of experts who reviewed and provided feedback on the original draft of the handbook. Originally, the research design included a component of interviewing foster children with the goal of providing “voice” for children to express their own concerns with the education system and their hopes, dreams, and needs. However, resulting from the strict confidentiality laws with children, especially children in care, speaking to and getting insight directly from foster children was not possible. Nevertheless, this handbook does serve as an effective informative resource that can be used by teachers and other school staff working with foster children. This handbook will help teachers understand foster children’s histories, developmental and behavioural issues, school experiences, needs, necessary accommodations, and strategies to help them succeed in all facets of life.

Outline of the Remainder of the Document

The remainder of this document is divided into four chapters. The content of the remaining chapters is outlined below. Chapter Two contains a critical review of the literature, which guided the development of the informative handbook. The review begins with an introduction to the importance of this research, followed by a look at the common adverse backgrounds of foster children. Due to this adversity, the common prevalence of attachment disorder is then defined. Further discussion follows concerning the

socioemotional development of foster children, building their resiliency, common school experiences and failures, and what teachers can do to foster success in these children.

Finally, the rationale for the informative handbook is discussed.

Chapter Three presents the methodology used in the research project. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research context and rationale for the development of the handbook. Next, the development of the handbook is then described. Data collection and analysis methods are outlined. Finally, the limitations of the study are disclosed.

Chapter Four contains a copy of the teacher handbook. The handbook is divided into sections. First is a look at the common histories foster children share, followed by a profile of “who is a foster child”, adversities they may face, their unique needs, development and behaviour issues, and frequency of attachment disorder. Then a section is included on what educational struggles are common to most foster children and how teachers can help build resiliency, social skills, competency, and motivation in order for them to succeed in school. A section will focus on what teachers need to know about how to effectively work with foster children and provide appropriate accommodations and expectations. Additionally, eight strategies are highlighted as exemplars of specific activities that teachers can undertake within classroom practices to promote children’s (a) positive attachment to teachers and adults, (b) socioemotional development, (c) resiliency, and (d) communication. Finally, a list of additional print and Internet based resources is provided.

Chapter Five presents the summary, conclusions, and implications of the research. The chapter begins with a summary of the research, followed by a description of the data collected from experts in the field of social work that contributed to the handbook. The

implications of the relationship between the foster care system, education system, and professional development are discussed. Finally, the limitations and suggestions for further research are presented.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Recognizing the complexity of adverse backgrounds of foster children, the negative effects of attachment disorder, and socioemotional health problems is key to developing effective programs for this population of children. By understanding the literature and experiences of foster children, the ultimate goal of increased educational success can be realized. Using data from academic journals and research in this area can facilitate an increase in the awareness of teachers and school staff in order to make the education experience of foster children more constructive and successful. The ultimate goal in working with foster children outside and inside the school is to help them discover their identities and moral values and enhance their problem-solving skills and social competencies, ultimately fostering their resiliency.

Theoretical Framework

Two main theories helped situate and inform this research study, which also provide a lens to explore the literature on foster children in education. Ecological systems theory holds that the development of a human being reflects the influence of several environmental systems, identifying five environmental systems with which an individual interacts (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Those five systems include: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Secondly, social cognitive theory of human behaviour helped inform why children behave the way they do and how their personalities develop. According to Santrock (2008), social cognitive theory is a learning theory based on the ideas that people learn by watching what others do and do not do; these processes are important to understanding personality. In other words, people learn by observing others, with the environment,

behaviour, and cognition all as the chief factors in influencing development (Santrock, 2008). Social cultural theorists posit that “across the life course, experiences in different cultural contexts (e.g., home, school, peer group, community) influence how one perceives oneself” (Spencer, Dupree, & Hartmann, 1997, p. 817). Spencer et al., (1997) argue that “experiences not only influence how much one feels valued or valuable (self-esteem), but it also influences how one gives meaning and significance to different aspects of oneself (i.e. abilities, physical attributes, behaviours, and activities)” (p. 817).

Bronfenbrenner’s seminal text, *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design* (1979), summarized decades of theory and research about the fundamental processes that guide life-span development. Urie Bronfenbrenner argued that in order to understand human development, one must consider the entire ecological system through which growth occurs (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Bronfenbrenner focused on a scientific approach emphasizing the interrelationship of different processes and their contextual difference, while ensuring his research was observing individuals in their natural environment, in other words “ecologically valid” (Darling, 2007).

Bronfenbrenner (1994) stated,

this system is composed of five socially organized subsystems that help support and guide human growth. They range from the microsystem, which refers to the relationship between a developing person and the immediate environment, such as school and family, to the macrosystem, which refers to institutional patterns of culture, such as the economy, customs, and bodies of knowledge. (p. 37)

The individual is seen at the center of a series of concentric circles representing microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. Connecting these circles are

multiple arrows linking contexts within systems (nursery school to neighborhood) and linking contexts across systems (family to school). Ecological systems theory is presented as a theory of human development in which everything is seen as interrelated and our knowledge of development is bounded by context, culture, and history (Darling, 2007).

The second theoretical premise that helped inform this project is based on social cognitive theory of human behaviour. Behaviour modification programs for children with disruptive behaviour disorders are largely predicated on social cognitive theory (Fabiano & Pelham, 2003). The theory posits that most human behaviour is learned observationally through the modeling of others (Bandura, 1977). Thus, from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviours are to be performed. These observations become coded information and serve as a guide for future action (Bandura, 1977). Social learning theory explains human behaviour in terms of continuous interaction between cognitive, behavioural, and environmental influences.

Bandura's theory provides a framework for understanding, predicting, and changing human behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Similar to that of Bronfenbrenner, social learning theory identifies human behaviour as an interaction of personal factors, behaviours, and the environment (Bandura, 1986). In Bandura's causal model of triadic reciprocal causation, the interaction between the person and behaviour involves the influence of a person's own thoughts and actions. Next, the interaction between the person and the environment involves human beliefs and cognitive competencies that are developed and modified by social influences and structures within the environment (Bandura, 1986). Last, the interaction between the environment and behaviour involves a

person's behaviour determining the aspects of their environment and in turn their behaviour is modified by that environment (Bandura, 1986). Social cognitive theory is helpful in understanding individual as well as group behaviour and aids in identifying methods by which behaviour can be modified or changed.

The Child in Care

Children in care are a unique population with distinct needs and strengths. Most important, adults who work with foster children need to understand their histories and the corresponding negative mental and emotional effects from being removed from their parents and homes. It is crucial for teachers to be educated on how to properly address the unique needs of foster care children in their classrooms. Teachers, along with the education system as a whole, play an integral and multifaceted role in supporting the foster child. Teachers have the power to have a lasting positive impact on the lives and education of foster care children. Approximately 76,000 children in Canada are under the protection of Child and Family Services across the country and are referred to as children in care (Farris-Manning & Zandstra, 2003). Since approximately 71% of children in care are school-aged children, it is imperative that the educational outcomes for these statistically vulnerable students improve (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2008).

There are some helpful resources for teachers to strategize their approach to teaching foster children in their classrooms. Dr. Nancy McKellar from Wichita State University does substantial work in the area of counseling, educational and school psychology. McKellar (2004) says "education has been found to be crucially important to the quality of adult life for individuals who have spent part of their childhood in foster

care” (p. 29). McKellar states for example that it is critical for teachers to realize that elementary-aged foster children may have difficulty listening and following rules, may be fearful and anxious, think often of family problems, have poor frustration tolerance, and fail to complete work. Furthermore, adolescent foster children often struggle with authority figures; experience conflicting loyalties between their biological and foster families; and feel inferior, different, or worthless (McKellar, 2004). School can be an important stabilizing force in the lives of foster children. Helpful documents such as *Everybody’s a Teacher: Resources for people working with children in Foster Care* by topic compiled by centerforchildwelfare2.com and *Supporting Students in Foster Care* by McKellar and Cowen (2011) are available to teachers who seek out information about foster children. McKellar states that valuable time can be lost if educators delay in responding to the needs of children in foster care because they are perceived to be just passing through. Key factors that promote resilience are caring and supportive relationships, positive and high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation in the classroom. The first step towards creating a positive learning environment and a successful educational experience for foster children is the development of an understanding of foster children’s adverse backgrounds, the complexity of attachment disorder, social and emotional development, effective behavioural management, resiliency, and barriers to school success.

Adverse Backgrounds

A foster child is a child who has been legally removed on a temporary or permanent basis and being cared for by legally approved caregivers. Typically, these “temporary” guardians are court appointed as a result of the natural or adoptive parents’

inability to provide their children with safety, nurture, or care. Children who enter foster care have usually experienced multiple traumatic events committed by a previous caregiver; these events serve as the cause for removal from their homes (Oswald, Fegert, & Goldbeck, 2010). Between 2007 and 2008, there were 77,089 allegations of child abuse in Ontario, with 27,816 children taken into the care of the Children's Aid Society. Most of the children were returned to their parents after the cases were investigated. However, for many of those children, it would not be the first time they encountered the system ("Children's Aid Society of Haldimand and Norfolk", 2008). Each foster child's history is unique. However, the experience of multiple traumatic events that is common to foster children increases the risk of social, emotional, and educational struggles. According to Jee et al. (2010), children in foster care represent a population with specific needs due to their prior trauma, risk for adverse outcomes, and need for mental health care.

Most children in foster care have experienced early childhood trauma including child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and impaired parenting, placing them at risk for long-term negative health and emotional outcomes (Felitti et al., 1998). Moreover, according to Greeson et al. (2011), many children in the child welfare system have histories of recurrent interpersonal trauma perpetrated by caregivers early in life, often referred to as complex trauma. Not only are children taken away from their biological parents for one form of abuse or neglect, but many face poly-victimization as well. The term poly-victimization is often used to describe the experience of multiple forms of abuse, violence, or other interpersonal victimization experiences (Ford, Wasser, & Connor, 2011).

Common to all foster children is the unfortunate fact that they experienced unfit caregivers who either abused or neglected them, and in turn the children were removed and placed in a different home environment. Whether placed with other family members or complete strangers, foster children share this adverse background that must be taken into consideration when working with and caring for them. There must remain sensitivity among adults who interact with children in care, as they are a vulnerable population who are in need of countless avenues of support both inside and outside of the home.

Attachment Disorder

Resultant from foster children's adverse histories is the development of attachment disorder. Attachment disorder is defined as "a disruption in the initial attachment formed between an infant and a primary caregiver that often leads to some type of disordered or disorganized attachment" (Stinehart, Scott, & Barfield, 2012, p. 355). Many foster children will experience multiple placements and several temporary relationships, potentially preventing them from forming secure attachments that are crucial for developmental health (Bowlby, 1982). Attachment theory finds its origins in Bowlby's (1944) early observations of young delinquents. Bowlby's work helped clarify the phases of young children's reactions after the separation from their parents. Three phases were described in his work: protest, sadness, and detachment (Bowlby, 1969). He lists the common long-term consequences of the broken attachment of a child and a parent: anxiety, rage, depression, and psychiatric disorders.

Reactive attachment disorder is a more extreme psychiatric diagnosis for a group of children with the most significant and detrimental insecure attachments (Tobin, Wardi-Zonna, & Yezzi-Shareef, 2007). Foster children frequently suffer from developmental

delays and severe behaviour problems, often leading to repeated displacements that in turn increase the risk for more severe attachment disorders (Gauthier, Fortin, & Jeliu, 2004, p. 379). This unfortunately is the reality for most foster children, the risk of multiple attachment disruptions. It is in the greatest interest of the foster child with these developmental and behavioural problems to be placed in a home where caregivers are capable of interacting and handling these problems in a productive way.

In order to form secure attachments once again after being removed from their biological families, it is critical that foster children are placed in homes where members are trained, caring, and nurturing. Bretherton (1991) suggests that if a caregiver responds to a child in a loving and sensitive manner, the child is more likely to develop a sense of self as lovable and worthy of care. On the contrary, when a child receives care that is either inconsistent or insensitive, he or she tends to generalize this experience of unreliable care into a representation of the self as unlovable or unworthy (Bretherton, 1991). Addressing the role of the early parent–child relationship, Hennig (2004) emphasizes the importance of secure attachments. Adults who had developed a pattern of secure attachment as children were able to develop a level of reflective functioning that supported their capacity for altruistic care towards others. Conversely, adults who had grown up with anxious or avoidant patterns of attachment often wrongly interpreted another's intentions and failed to understand their own motives in offering care (Hennig, 2004). The level of attachment or detachment an individual experiences as a child can affect how they interpret their relationships with others in the future. This encourages the vitality in placing foster children in good homes and with families where they will form positive and productive bonds and attachments.

Concepts rooted in attachment theory have led child welfare professionals to realize that children's best interests lie in the preservation of their attachment ties and that repeated ruptures of such ties can constitute a severe trauma (Gauthier et al., 2004). Akerman and Dozier (2005) hold that "children who have experienced attachment disruptions would be most likely to revise negative appraisals of self and others when placed with an available and emotionally invested caregiver" (p. 508). McKellar (2004) comments, "children's reactions to removal from the biological parents, and how they adapt to foster care, are related to their levels of cognitive, emotional, and social development and their ability to resolve issues of attachment and separation" (p. 30). Attachment disorder can cause foster children to behave in many different ways. Very young children may exhibit developmental delays, clingy and dependent behaviour, temper tantrums, and withdrawal (McKellar, 2004). For decades there has been substantial research conducted on attachment theory which can lend insights into understand the lives of children in care. Attachment theory must be understood by teachers and other adults working with foster children in order to comprehend the behaviours foster children exhibit. This area of research is critical in effectively developing programs and strategies for fostering families, teachers, and caseworkers to improve the lives of foster children.

Socioemotional Development

The quality of the early home environment plays a critical role in determining the development of very young children and in turn predicts their later cognitive, academic, and behavioural functioning (Whittaker, Harden, See, Meisch, & Westbrook, 2011). Whittaker et al. (2011) explain that it is during infancy, when most rapid and complex

development occurs, that children are at most risk of developing socioemotional problems that will affect them later in life. Concurrently, this early foundational period is also a time of extreme vulnerability, especially for foster children who are immersed in high-risk environments.

In addressing antisocial behaviour in children, Hennig (2004) recommends that interventions should focus on providing reparative relationships that nurture a healthy moral identity. According to Ackerman and Dozier (2005), an infant is incapable of differentiating an appraisal of the caregiver and a representation of the self until late in the first year of life and the child builds an initial sense of identity on how well (or how poorly) his or her needs are met. Thus, the goal is to move individuals from insecure attachments to secure achieved attachments. In addition, rather than relying on formal social skills training, Hennig (2004) states,

good parents, teachers, clergy members recognize that character building takes place in the milieu of life, discussion prompted by peer conflict and in modeling how they resolve their own disputes. It occurs in fleeting moments when children spontaneously express something that is troubling. (p. 75)

Blasi (1993) describes the formation of moral identity taking place as a part of the formation of a more organized and cohesive identity that typically occurs in adolescence and early adulthood. For example, this includes the commitment to certain social roles. In addition, Blasi focuses on the experiential aspects of identity as being formative in moral identity, such as an individual's sense of agency and autonomy. Wainryb and Pasupathi (2010) have expressed concern that children who have experienced significant trauma

may have difficulty viewing their actions as being initiated and guided by their own mental states and may have difficulty developing a sense of moral agency.

Based on early experiences of abandonment, maltreatment, and/or uncommitted caregiving, foster children may be at increased risk for developing negative self-representations (Ackerman & Dozier, 2005). Adverse caregiving histories, in addition to biological risk factors, contribute to psychosocial deficits among children in care including difficulties with intimacy, aggression, and low levels of self-esteem (Dore & Eisner, 1993). The presence of healthy relationships can help in combating these psychosocial deficits. Eisenberg (2004) suggests that young people can benefit greatly from relationships with other adults and peers that model prosocial behaviours and that the modeling of altruistic behaviour is more influential when there is a close bond between the child and the adult. Therefore, it appears that there may be a significant role, when parental support has been absent, for other caregivers to act as surrogate sources of emotional support vital for the development of morality in foster children (Woodier, 2011). This accentuates the importance of having good role models in the lives of foster children. Parents, teachers, and peers are very influential in the lives of all children. Particularly with foster children, when individuals demonstrate good social skills, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and competence, this will aid foster children in their social and emotional development.

Behaviour

According to the Canadian Mental Health Association (n.d.), it is estimated that 10-20% of Canadian youth are affected by a mental illness or disorder, known to be the single most disabling group of disorders worldwide. These children represent the most

challenging students in our classrooms today, and as previously stated, children in foster care make up the majority of this population of students. Foster children's mental health problems make it difficult for them to regulate their emotions and focus on learning (Minahan & Rappaport, 2012). Most significantly, "children with behavioural challenges often fail in school, waste too much time in detentions and suspensions, fall years behind in academics, and never master the skills they need to make adequate progress" (Minahan & Rappaport, 2012, p. 1).

One of the biggest issues in the classroom today is not the prevalence of children with behaviour and mental health issues, but that teachers are often ill equipped to respond to students' challenging behaviours. Walter, Gouze, & Lim (2006) stress that "these educators receive minimal training in child and adolescent mental health issues or to develop interventions that can help reduce behavioural incidents and increase access to the curriculum" (p. 2). Minahan and Rappaport (2012) state that,

without effective behaviour intervention plans, staff often feel they must choose between the risky route of putting academic demands on these students and the path of least resistance, that is, minimizing academic demands to avoid the students' becoming more disruptive. (p. 2).

Students with emotional and behavioural challenges are performing poorly both academically and behaviourally in our schools (Reid et al., 2008).

Carr et al. (2002) argue that understanding the following critical concepts helps teachers choose how to intervene better with students' problematic behaviour:

Misbehavior is a symptom of an underlying cause, behaviour is communication, behaviour has a function, behaviour occurs in patterns, the only behaviour teachers can

control is their own, and behaviour can be changed (Carr et al., 2002). Carr and his colleagues (2002) argue that if a student is displaying problematic, maladaptive behaviour, it is a symptom of an underdeveloped skill. Thus, teachers have a large responsibility to assist foster children in developing these critical skills (since children spend most of their waking hours at school).

Scarlett (1998) believes that in his developmental approach when discussing behaviour disorders in children, medical language should be used cautiously. Underscoring this belief, Scarlett states, “the language of disorders does not help identify those causes of behaviour problems over which teachers have control; second, this language has little to say about what teachers should do for children; and, third, this language can dehumanize children” (p. 14). The most important reason why educators and school staff should not use medical terminology to define children’s behaviour is the risk of perpetuating negative labels. Scarlett (1998) believes that labels for disorders were never intended to be labels for children. He argues that labels make us look at children with problems more in terms of their *being problems* and less in terms of their *being children*.

The way teachers approach misbehaviour in their classrooms is crucial. Each teacher brings with him or her his or her own beliefs and thoughts about behaviour management, either learned from their teacher education program or emanating from their teaching practice. However, it is clear that some behaviour management strategies may be more efficacious than others, while others can actually cause harm and negative outcomes with not only foster children but children in general.

Scarlett's (1998) behaviour development approach emphasizes the importance of teachers being positive, respectful, and nurturing toward children rather than ridiculing or punishing. As Stone asserts, "good discipline is not just punishing or enforcing rules. It is liking children and letting them see that they are liked" (Stone, 1969, p. 7). This emphasis reflects a deep respect for young children and an appreciation for the fact that young children have the same need to be treated with respect as any other group of human beings. Second, Scarlett (1998) emphasizes self-esteem as necessary for children to outgrow their behaviour problems. Third, Scarlett underscores the importance of setting limits and being firm, with a clear emphasis on the importance of guiding children. Hymes (1995) concurs "discipline is the slow, bit-by-bit, time-consuming task of helping children to see the sense in acting in a certain way" (p. 6). Last, Scarlett (1998) emphasizes classroom management as a core component of his behaviour development approach. A decade earlier, Marion (1987) also stated that "a classroom in which movement is rigidly controlled, arbitrary rules are imposed, disorganization of materials is commonplace, and little thought is given to enhancing the room's comfort and attractiveness is a nonsupportive, hostile environment" (p. 63). This hostile type of space does not support the growth of mastery and self-control.

Resiliency

Resiliency can be defined as a "basic human capacity, nascent in all children, to face, overcome and be strengthened by or even transformed by the adversities of life" (Grotberg, 1997, p. 10). Resiliency is also recognized as a capacity that allows a person to prevent, minimize, or overcome the damaging effects of adversity (R. Gilligan, 2009). The last part of Gilligan's (2009) definition is especially helpful in the work of building

resiliency in foster children: the capability to be transformed and strengthened by adversity. Others refer to this building of resiliency as a “steeling effect” through which moderate levels of risk prepare the young person to face future adversity (Schoon, 2006).

Craven and Lee (2010) explain resiliency by stating, “the amount of negative influence experienced by children in foster care is a function of how resilient they are and the extent to which they can endure and grow from stressful experiences” (p. 214).

Likewise, resiliency is an outcome produced by the following personal traits: social competency, problem-solving skills, autonomy, optimism, and ability to recruit social support (Craven & Lee, 2010). Leve, Fisher, and Chamberlain (2009) recognize resiliency as a “developmental feature that captures individual differences in adaptation to specific risk contexts or developmental hazards, including maltreatment and foster care placement” (p. 1871). In practical terms, this means that resiliency cannot be accomplished by removal of all risk but can be realized in the careful managing of risk; it can be encouraged through the positive use of stress to improve competencies (Newman & Blackburn, 2002; Rutter, 2006).

Hass and Graydon (2009) state that resiliency is often conceptualized in two broad categories: personal strengths and environmental protective factors. Personal strengths include categories such as; social competence, problem solving, autonomy, and sense of purpose, whereas environmental protective factors are present in the family, community, or schools and include caring relationships, clear and positive expectations by family members, educators, and community members for achievement, and opportunities to participate and contribute (Hass & Graydon, 2009). Woodier (2011) suggests that resiliency is a function of innate cognitive abilities but is also dependent on

the exposure to instruction and modeling of problem solving. There are many lists of protective assets associated with resiliency in young people; the main three discussed by researchers and professionals are: self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-awareness (Woodier, 2011).

Harter, Bresnick, Bouchey, and Whitesell (1997) argue that the construction of multiple selves in different roles and relationships during adolescence allows young people to construct different perceptions of self-worth that can form the basis for a more overall sense of self-esteem. A positive self-esteem can then act as a valuable buffer against the effects of adversity (R. Gilligan, 2009; Newman & Blackburn, 2002). Self-esteem is associated with perceived approval from significant others and success in valued roles, and it is more likely to come through developing skills in real-life situations (Harter et al., 1997; Newman & Blackburn, 2002). This communicates the importance of foster children finding things they enjoy doing. Extracurricular activities and other programs involving other children are important when establishing a positive sense of self-esteem. In addition, children in care are encouraged to participate in volunteering activities within their communities. Bandura (2004) describes a process of fostering humanness in individuals by enabling them to recognize and identify with suffering in others. He describes the effect of perceiving a common humanity as the transformative power of humanization. Daniel and Wassell (2002) also state that “holding positive values and having the capacity to act in a helpful, caring and responsible way towards others is associated with resilience” (p. 63).

Furthermore, self-efficacy is about believing that one’s own efforts make a difference and that one can determine personal life outcomes (Bandura, 1995; R.

Gilligan, 2009). Resiliency can be enhanced when young people have opportunities to contribute to and take responsibility for decisions that affect their lives (R. Gilligan, 2009). Bernard (2004) also lists self-awareness alongside self-esteem and self-efficacy as being important attributes related to resilience. She defines self-awareness as the capacity to observe one's thinking, feelings, and attributes, manifesting as a "stepping back" from experience and the "grip" of emotion (Bernard, 2004). Newman and Blackburn (2002) comment that "the key quality needed to trigger resilience and recovery is the ability to see childhood adversities in a new way, and to recognize that one is not a powerless actor in a drama written by others" (p. 7).

Important to the holistic development of the child, "resilience should be viewed as an integral part of those processes by which young people build their identities" (Woodier, 2011, p. 277). The process of forming an identity is an important developmental undertaking for children and adolescents; it involves the organization and integration of self-concepts (Harter, 1990). Woodier contends that "interventions that focus on building self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-esteem may be especially potent as these attributes seem to be instrumental in building resilience and encouraging the fusing of values to sense of self" (p. 277). Woodier (2011) suggests that moral identity and the integration of positive values have a significant role in building resilience in "looked after children". Furthermore, by helping students identify their personal inner strengths, they are able to identify areas of resilience that they had not consciously been aware of up to that point (Woodier, 2011).

Resiliency experts say that it is important to measure children's resiliency across multiple contexts, including school, peers, and family (Leve et al., 2009). The answer to

why some young people can be resilient in the face of adversity is a complex one and lies within the interaction between the nature of risk and adversity involved, the qualities and experiences of the young person, and the quality of the relationships and environment in which the young person is growing up (Benight & Bandura, 2004). While intrinsic attributes are important, it is equally important to acknowledge that resilience emerges in a supportive context (Woodier, 2011). Even when children lack early experiences of nurturing relationships, teachers and other caregivers can have an important role in helping to build resiliency by nurturing positive values (Woodier, 2011, p. 277).

There are many forms of therapy that focus on building resiliency in foster children. For example, transitional group therapy (TGT) is a program for first-time foster children striving to reduce undesirable effects from their adverse situations and disrupted lifestyle (Craven & Lee, 2010). Craven and Lee (2010) explain the three stages of treatment in TGT: establishing rapport, introducing resiliency, and integration of knowledge. These stages work to counter the negative outcomes of foster care and increase the knowledge, resiliency, and life skills necessary for foster children to beat the odds that they face (Craven & Lee, 2010).

School Performance

Children and youth in foster care face significant barriers to positive educational experiences and academic achievement (Munson & Freundlich, 2008, p. 1). Many researchers have taken a specific focus on the educational issues experienced by foster children along with the realization that: (a) school failure is associated with serious long term negative consequences; (b) schools are a potential source of much needed stability and guidance for children who have been taken away from their homes; (c) there are

many practical options for improvement; and (d) wide-ranging remediation efforts have not yet been demonstrated to work (Ferguson & Wolkow, 2012). Gustavsson and MacEachron (2012) note that “foster children are at an elevated risk for a number of negative educational outcomes: low graduation rates, special education enrollment, grade retention, school behavioral problems, poor academic performance, behavioral health challenges, and school mobility” (p. 83). For later school years, high school completion or general education development attainment among children in care is estimated at 50% while the rate for children in the general population is about 86% (Vacca, 2007).

Zetlin et al. (2006b) proposes that all foster children tend to struggle academically and socially, regardless of whether they come into the system already experiencing learning or mental health problems or whether challenges develop later as a result of frequent moves, lack of learning supports, or unmet emotional and other needs. There are many school challenges foster children face. Foster children have higher rates of absenteeism and greater need for positive discipline. Additionally, foster children have significant below-grade-level academic performance, higher rates of grade repetition, and disproportionate rates of special education placement (Zetlin et al., 2006b). Furthermore, studies show that on standardized performance tests in reading and mathematics, foster children score significantly lower results than nonfoster children (Zetlin et al., 2006b). Additionally, children in care demonstrate a greater frequency in behavioral problems in school ranging from aggressive, demanding, immature, and attention-seeking behaviors to withdrawn, anxious, and overcompliant behaviours in comparison to nonfoster children (Eckenrode, Laird, & Doris, 1993).

A concerning educational issue for foster children is the overrepresentation in special education programs (Zetlin, Weinberg, & Kimm, 2004). Approximately 40% to 47% of children in care receive special education services, and they are significantly more likely to be identified as having emotional disturbances and physical disabilities as compared to nonfoster children (Stone, D'Andrade, & Austin, 2007). Available findings suggest that children in foster care receiving special education services experience lower educational achievement (e.g., Geenen & Powers, 2006; Smithgall, Gladden, Yang, & Goerge, 2005) and poorer transition outcomes once they grow older and leave the education system compared to children in foster care who do not receive special education services.

The transition between schools, between classrooms, and different programming is a very vulnerable time for foster children. Many have experienced numerous home placement and school changes. A real need exists for transition strategies to be in place within foster homes, the welfare agency, and schools in the likely event that these transitions occur. An issue that takes place in schools is the difficult and sometimes overwhelming transition of a child from a regular classroom setting to special education setting. Research by Geenen and Powers (2006) documented the lack of coordinated transition planning between special education and child welfare. In addition, the level of utilization of special education transition services by eligible children in foster care is unknown (Greenan & Powers, 2006). An important need exists to gain a fuller picture of both foster children's experiences and perspectives on their education and transition, specifically among children in foster care who are receiving special education services. Because children in foster care lack parents to advocate on their behalf and because of the

poor achievement outcomes of this population, it is critical that public schools and child welfare agencies work together to develop formal procedures for supporting the educational functioning of foster children (Zetlin et al., 2006a).

Fostering Successes for Foster Children

Attachment to a primary caregiver is an innate need, and healthy infants will actively seek out ways to make these connections (e.g., eye gazing, body gestures, smiling and cooing; Stinehart, Scott, & Barfield, 2012). All individuals are born with the instinctual need to seek, nurture, and form attachments with individuals on whom they can depend (Stinehart et al., 2012). Secure attachments with guardians are needed in the lives of foster children as well as positive bonding experiences with teachers in the school system. Bomber (2007) recommends that children who have experienced significant disrupted attachments early in life need a relationship with a key adult in the school who can help them manage their feelings by receiving sensitivity and empathy. Schofield and Beek (2005) found that the educational and social outcomes for children who had caregivers who were able to reflect on the children's thoughts, feelings, and behaviour were significantly improved.

Foster children's behaviours in school might be driven by a pervasive sense of shame that Hughes observes is common to many foster children (2006). Tangney and Dearing (2003) define shame as "an acutely painful emotion that is typically accompanied by a sense of shrinking or of being small and by a sense of worthlessness and powerlessness" (p. 18). Shame often leads to a desire to escape or to hide. When this is not possible, an individual is likely to lash out in a state of rage (Woodier, 2011). Woodier (2011) goes on to say that, when shamed, the young person experiences himself

as bad, unlovable, and worthless. Tangney and Dearing (2003) propose, “whereas self-esteem is a self-evaluative construct representing how a person appraises himself in general across situations, shame is an affective state often triggered by a specific failure” (p. 56). Hughes (2006) also observes “shame is accompanied not only by anger but also by fear, the fear of being rejected and abandoned. In anticipating rejection, the child may activate a strong defensive reaction” (p. 183). Hughes notes, “a child may defend himself against such feelings of worthlessness through anger, denial, and blaming others” (pp. 177–178). For such a young person, establishing a feeling of emotional safety is paramount (Woodier, 2011). Significantly, “a child suffering from a pervasive sense of shame is less likely to notice the effect of his behaviour on others, and in so doing is less likely to develop empathy” (Hughes, p. 184).

Shame limits the effectiveness of a therapeutic approach by limiting the individuals’ reflective functioning, making it harder to make sense of behaviours because they are convinced that such explorations will lead to evidence that they are worthless (Hughes, 2006). It is my position that this common and intense feeling of shame shared by foster children is important to be understood by those caring for them as well as teachers and other school staff. Many behaviours foster children exhibit can be explained by this “shame theory.” Importantly, teachers who can empathize with foster children and encourage the development of feelings of self-worth in the child can potentially negate some of the ill effects of shame theory. Potentially, a teacher who communicates understanding of a child and holds high expectations for success for that student will contribute to that child’s self-worth.

One way of achieving some understanding of the child is through establishing open communication between foster children and teachers. Even though this task may take a considerable time to achieve, Geddes (2006) writes, “the task itself can be a bridge which links the teacher and pupil. Across this bridge the pupil experiences reliable interest and concern without feeling threatened by overwhelming feelings” (p. 74). Foster children, like all students, thrive when there is a connection and personal bond with their teachers. In order for all children to feel comfortable in the classroom, teachers need to work hard towards creating a positive relationship with their students. The students need to know that they genuinely care.

Carol Gilligan’s (1982) “ethics of care” starts from the premise that as humans we are inherently relational, responsive beings and the human condition is one of connectedness or interdependence. According to the theory of ethics of care, Gilligan argues, “it is wrong to interpret children’s relationships as unhealthy attachments or growth-limiting dependencies” (as cited in Tong, 2009, p. 89). On the contrary, Gilligan declares that attachments or dependencies are a sign of growth and, rather than encouraging children to be detached and independent, adults should encourage them to be responsive to other people’s needs and wants (as cited in Tong, 2009, p. 89). In an interview, C. Gilligan (2011) stated, “an ethics of care directs our attention to the need for responsiveness in relationships (paying attention, listening, responding) and to the costs of losing connection with oneself or with others” (para. 2). As long as teachers have a genuine interest to *care* for their students and demonstrate an ethic of care orientation to teaching, this task should be possible to achieve and have lasting positive effects on the success of students’ educational experience.

Although the attainment of developmental advantages by young people, including positive values, has been correlated with decreased rates of high risk behaviours (Leffert et al., 1998) and linked to certain thriving behaviours such as school success (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000), a direct link between the attainment of developmental advantages and resilience is perhaps more difficult to demonstrate. Schools and child welfare agencies need to work together in order to change the reality of education for foster children. Without consistent communication and cooperation related to the children's best interests, foster children's challenges in school will not be addressed or overcome.

Conclusion

By recognizing the complexity of adverse backgrounds of foster children and the negative effects of attachment disorder and socioemotional health problems, effective programs for this population of children can be developed and advanced. Children in care share adverse backgrounds that substantially increase their chances of developing attachment disorders and behavioural and developmental problems. It is the responsibility of foster care parents, teachers, and child welfare workers to work together to form proactive relationships, secure attachments, model prosocial and emotional behaviour, and build resiliency for foster care children. It is important to remember that foster children represent a unique population of youth with unique backgrounds and who possess distinct needs and different strengths that must be recognized by adults who care for and work with them. Foster children need to be granted equal opportunities to grow and succeed as other children do in schools. Teachers and foster parents need to give

optimal support and maintain high expectations in order to motivate these children and give them a sense of hope.

Foster parents, teachers, and other school staff must be educated and aware of the challenges foster children face in order to help make their education experience more constructive and successful. If all individuals working with foster children share the ultimate goal of helping these youth recognize their identities, moral values, problem-solving skills, and social competencies in order to increase their resiliency, changes can be made. There are resources available for teachers and foster parents for those who recognize the importance of increasing their knowledge on the specific needs of foster children. Foster children do not ask for the situation they are given. It is in their deserved and best interest that the community at large work together to improve the lives of these children.

It takes one teacher, one foster parent, or one caseworker to change the life of a foster child. It takes an individual who cares enough to develop a special bond and attachment to these children to give them the love and support necessary for them to succeed in all avenues of life. All children, despite their adversity, have the capacity to build internal and external sources of resiliency. This resiliency is best fostered in a supportive and caring environment. Adults need to work hard and commit time, energy, and education to assisting these children. Most important, the majority of children in care are school-aged children. School is undeniably the place where they spend most of their waking hours. According to Munson & Freundlich (2008), “positive school experiences can enhance children’s well-being, help them make more successful transitions to adulthood, and increase the likelihood that they can achieve personal fulfillment and

economic self-sufficiency and contribute positively to society” (p. 2). It is in the schools and up to staff and teachers to take advantage of this time to help develop foster children’s social skills, problem-solving skills, competency, attachments with peers and others, and resiliency in order for them to have a chance at “beating the odds.”

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RATIONALE

This chapter outlines the methodology used in the development of the handbook entitled, *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators*. This chapter is divided into various sections, each providing information about the rationale, research design, procedure, data collection tools, data analyses, and limitations of the study. The chapter begins with a discussion of the research context and rationale specific to the development of the handbook. Data collection through the review of the relevant literature is described, followed by an outline of the methods used for data analysis. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed.

Rationale

Children in foster care represent a population with specific needs resulting from their prior trauma, risk for adverse outcomes, and need for mental health care (Jee et al., 2010). Most children in foster care have experienced early childhood trauma including child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and impaired parenting, placing them at risk for long-term negative health and emotional outcomes (Felitti et al., 1998). From these experiences of trauma, most foster children experience feelings of confusion, fear, apprehension of the unknown, loss, sadness, anxiety, and stress (Bruskas, 2008). Bruskas (2008) urges that these feelings and experiences be addressed and treated early to prevent or decrease poor developmental and mental health outcomes that ultimately affect a child's educational experience and the quality of adulthood. Foster children are at a higher risk for many negative educational outcomes such as low grades, grade failure, unnecessary special education enrollment, and behavioural problems.

As a teacher with a high priority on the success of all children, I believe it is crucial for all teachers to be educated on how to address the unique needs of foster care children in their classrooms. They, along with the education system as a whole, play an integral role in supporting the foster child in multiple ways. For example, teachers can be the key players in forming positive attachments with foster children, especially if they aren't making bonds at home; school is a place where optimal socioemotional development can occur; it is important for teachers and peers to role model positive behaviour as well as work to increase the skills necessary to build resiliency. Teachers have the power to have a lasting positive impact on the lives and education of foster care children. With approximately 71% of children in care being school aged, it is critical that the educational outcomes for this population of children improve (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2008).

Situating the Research: Personal Relevance

As a student teacher, daycare educator, and aunt of two foster children, I have experienced firsthand the academic challenges and adversity of foster children that researchers Gustavsson and MacEachron (2012) describe. In my summers working at a Metis francophone daycare in northeastern Manitoba, 90% of my 1–12-year-old students were foster care children. Anecdotally, I noted that many of these children did not know how to deal with their own feelings and behaviours. Additionally, foster parents often felt ill equipped to address the foster care children's unique needs. At school, many of the children lacked social and emotional cues and, despite many being diagnosed with fetal alcohol syndrome, had severe behavioural issues. When observing children in the center, I noted that most of the foster children demonstrated challenges in playing with others,

communicating effectively, controlling their emotions, and following simple instructions. These foreseen behaviours displayed from foster children are not uncommon. Most children who enter foster care have already been exposed to conditions that undermine their chances for healthy development (Bass, Shields, and Behrman, 2004). Most have grown up in poverty and have been maltreated—conditions associated with delayed development and, in the case of maltreatment, problems with behaviour regulation, emotional disorders, and even compromised brain development (Jones Harden, 2004). According to Kortenkamp and Ehrle (2002), children in care are more likely to have behavioural and emotional problems and are at much higher risk of poor educational outcomes. In their study, Kortenkamp and Ehrle also found that a substantial number of children in the child welfare system had low levels of school engagement and were less likely to be involved in extracurricular activities. In response to this unfortunate reality for children in care, I and the other educators focused on building these types of skills with the children in our classes. We implemented strategies such as prompts and praise, natural reinforcement, and wrap-up and reflect. Remarkably, progress in the development of social, emotional, communication, behaviour management, and self-regulation skills for many of these children was noted after 3 months.

Additionally, I have been able to observe the crucial role of secure attachments for foster children as an aunt to two foster sisters. Over the last 5 years, I have been able to observe my nieces flourish and develop in a very loving, caring, and involved family. Despite some minor developmental issues, with the help of a supportive and nurturing family, the girls are learning social and competency skills, behaviour management skills, and are now able to recognize their emotions before acting out in inappropriate ways.

There are specific characteristics of family stability that support healthy child development. Characteristics of the home environment, such as warmth, emotional availability, stimulation, family cohesion, and day-to-day activities, have also been implicated in the notion of family stability (Olson, 2000). Jones Harden (2004) states that

children who experience family stability have caregivers who remain constant, consistent, and connected to them over time; caregivers who are mentally healthy and engage in appropriate parenting practices; a cohesive, supportive, and flexible family system; and a nurturing and stimulating home environment. (p. 33)

Jones Harden goes on to explain that this definition of family stability is an essential goal of child welfare intervention with biological, foster, and adoptive families. I agree in that perhaps the stable and consistent foster placement and my nieces' opportunity to form solid attachments and bonds with both their immediate and extended family members have provided a buffering effect for their early experiences. The children have been able to gain confidence and resiliency and combat the memories of their early adverse experiences. Thus, like Olson (2000) and Jones Harden (2000) who also hold this belief, the environment in which foster children are immersed can have insurmountable positive effects on their social, emotional, mental, and physical health.

My teaching philosophy has strengthened immensely over the last 5 years. Each and every student has taught me something valuable. My philosophy, similar to that of Parker Palmer's, is simple: You must teach with your heart. Palmer (1998) believes that "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique, good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p. 1). He says in order to teach from identity and integrity, we need to *talk* to each other about our inner lives, something he believes is abstract in

the teaching profession which “fears the personal and seeks safety in the technical” (p. 3). Palmer assures that when he refers to identity and integrity he does not solely mean our noble features or the good deeds we do; he says that identity and integrity have as much to do with our “shadows and limits, our wounds and fears, as with our strengths and potentials” (p. 3). He further states that, “good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. The connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts” (p. 2).

Randall Wischart also describes the “nurturing passionate teacher.” Wischart (2004) describes a “passionate teacher” as one who

lives a life as a reflective educator, making it a priority to build positive relationships with students, creating a classroom community in which students share responsibility for their own learning and the learning of their peers, nurturing a climate that focuses on learning rather than rules, developing strategies that grow from students’ emerging strengths as learners rather than by dwelling on learning deficiencies. (p. 46)

Wischart states, “teaching is about building relationships, dealing with content, skills, and habits of mind must come after teachers and students feel comfortable together” (p. 48).

Thus, a teacher’s ability to connect to children and children’s lives, to be attentive and responsive to their needs and strengths, and lead with a “teaching passionate heart”

(Palmer, 1998; Wischart, 2004) is crucial for foster care children’s success in the classroom and beyond.

Developing the Handbook

The development of the handbook required a significant amount of research from the fields of education, social work, and educational psychology. First, a thorough search of the literature was conducted in an attempt to determine a current need for the project. The purpose of the review was to bring awareness to the harshness of the adversity foster children experience, determine the severity of the educational and socioemotional outcomes of foster children left unrecognized by acting agents in the education system, and the ultimate need for information to be available to teachers concerning foster children in their classrooms in order to increase their school and life success. A need for the project was established with the discovery the minimal research in the field of foster children in education. Underresearched are the pathways by which children in the care system might overcome their childhood disadvantages through their education (Jackson & Ajayi, 2007). According to Hojer, Johansson, Hill, Cameron, and Jackson (2008), there is a need for greater examination of care systems and the remedial role that can be played by education. Furthermore, from a policy perspective, there is a lack of empirical evidence on best practice approaches being adopted by policy-makers and professionals working in care and education sectors in other jurisdictions (Darmody et al., 2013).

Once a need for the project was established, a critical analysis of the literature was conducted in an attempt to determine the unique needs of foster children and outline the strategies, accommodations, and expectations teachers can use when working with foster children in their classrooms. The function of a literature review in research is to provide an objective account of what has been written on a given subject (Ryan, Coughlin, & Cronin, 2007). The aim of a literature review is to explore concepts

embedded in data, allowing theory to be generated from the data rather than the other way around (Robinson, 2002). According to Meadows (2003), existing literature provides both the basis for research and the context for interpreting findings. When critiquing research, it is important to follow steps and ask oneself important research questions when analyzing the information being presented. One must look at the research question, theoretical framework, methodology, sampling procedures, ethical considerations, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, the findings, and implications of the research. Ryan et al. (2007) state that the “critical analysis of a qualitative study involves an in-depth review of how each step of the research was undertaken” (p. 743). By focusing on the steps necessary to understand the full scope of the research being reviewed, one can fully understand the themes and underlying concepts towards their personal research questions.

The results of the critical analysis of the literature review provided insight into the needs of foster care students and culminated in the creation of the handbook, *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators*. This handbook was created to support teachers’ knowledge of foster children and their unique needs as well as highlight some effective strategies that could be implemented within the classroom to address (a) positive attachment to teachers and adults, (b) socioemotional development, (c) resiliency, and (d) communication. Ultimately, the goal of the handbook is to provide essential understandings and pathways for educators to increase foster children’s chances of success in school. The handbook targets elementary educators, as kindergarten to grade 6 are critical years for child development. Fisher, Burraston, and Pears (2005) believe that early intervention is oriented toward creating optimal

environmental conditions to facilitate developmental progress. According to Reynolds et al. (2001), early intervention during preschool and early elementary years is widely regarded as an effective way to prevent learning difficulties and to promote healthy development. In their study, Klee, Kronstadt, and Zlotnick (1997) found that more than 80% of their sample of foster children younger than age 6 had developmental or emotional problems (50% had problems in both areas). If children this young are facing this amount of risk, it is important to target these deficits early on. Furthermore, Ruff, Blank, and Barnett (1990) described the tendency for young foster children to manifest developmental delays and other physical, behavioural, and cognitive difficulties if left unaddressed. Moreover, scientifically, advances in the neuroscience of brain development have accelerated interest and investments in the earlier years of life (Nelson & Bloom, 1997). Finally, as McKellar (2004) reports, “most children in foster care are school-aged (ages 6–18) with a mean age of about 10, or the typical age of fourth graders” (p. 29). Thus, given the preponderance of early development and lifelong success implications and the vast number of children in care, early intervention is key for foster children.

School can be an important stabilizing force in the lives of foster children, and teachers should strive to help them feel safe and welcome in the school (McKellar, 2004). It is in the critical elementary school years that foster children can be set up with a solid foundation that can bring success in their futures.

Specifically, the handbook provides teachers with a resource that summarizes the important research on foster children, their development, attachment, socioemotional and behaviour issues, as well as including a series of strategies to effectively manage and teach these students with the overall intention of enhancing their school experience. The

goal of the handbook is for its use as a resource for teachers to highlight some of the needs and strategies that are appropriate for students who are in the foster care system, especially those who are presenting a challenging time at school and at home. The instructional and behaviour management strategies and techniques are intended to be beneficial for all students, not only foster children. Additionally, the research and resulting handbook hint at the need for additional training and professional development in intervention techniques and strategies to help teachers effectively teach foster students who show symptoms of attachment disorders, behavioural disorders, and socioemotional development difficulties in a positive, safe, and encouraging education environment.

Expert Evaluation of Handbook

In order to evaluate the relevancy and content the handbook *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators*, two experts in the field of education and the Family and Children's Services were provided an early draft and invited to make comments. The results of this evaluation are provided in Chapter Five. A former special education teacher and superintendent for a school board in Ontario and current education liaison at a Family and Children's Services agency was asked to review the handbook, which was created by the use of an exhaustive literature review. This individual and a colleague were asked to comment on the information provided in the handbook and make notes and suggestions on its validity and usefulness as a teacher resource. Additionally, a former Child and Family Services worker/supervisor from Manitoba was also invited to review the handbook and its contents. Specifically, these experts were asked to identify any other relevant information that would be beneficial to

include in the handbook based on their experience working directly with foster children. All comments and suggestions were used to modify the original draft of the handbook.

Critical Review of the Literature

An independent review of the literature was conducted to confirm the information provided concerning foster children, their behavioural issues, socioemotional development, resiliency, and school experiences as well as the teaching strategies that were included in the handbook. The readings selected for inclusion in this handbook were selected from peer-reviewed educational journals, books written for parents and teachers, and pamphlets from social work and foster care agency offices.

The literature reviewed for this project was based on the research found on foster child adversity, socioemotional development, common disorders, intervention programs, and studies of school success and effectiveness of programs for foster children. The involvement of the education system and the social work system and their relationship in the lives of children in care were also considered. Information on these topics was found using databases and search engines, primarily Academic Search Complete, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The key words for the search included “foster children,” “socioemotional development,” “attachment,” “resiliency,” and “school.”

Limitations

The research of this project is limited in that the collection of data reviewed for this project was gathered solely from a critical review of relevant literature. Unfortunately, due to the strict confidentiality laws with children, especially children in care, using child participants for this study was not possible.

Furthermore, much of the research found was conducted in the United States. It can only be assumed that much of the research reflects foster children in Canada because of the overall similarities of the two countries. It needs to be taken into consideration that the United States is much larger than Canada, having a larger population of people, and therefore more foster children, which could alter the statistics when comparing to Canada.

Last, only a small number of individuals were chosen to review the first draft of the handbook. These individuals were two education liaisons with a Family and Child Services agency in Ontario and a former supervisor of a Child and Family Services agency in Manitoba.

Summary of Chapter Three

Foster children represent a population of children with specific needs resulting from their adverse histories. Foster children are at a higher risk for many negative educational outcomes including low grades, grade failure, special education enrollment, and behaviour problems. As noted earlier, Bruskas (2008) urges that foster children's feelings and experiences must be addressed and treated early to prevent or decrease poor developmental and mental health outcomes that ultimately affect a child's educational experience and the quality of adulthood. Teachers, being the most key players in the education of foster children, must be informed of their unique needs in order to work towards bettering their overall academic experience.

From working with foster children ages 1 to 12, as well as being an aunt of two foster sisters, I have developed an interest in this area. I hope that my work contributes to the body of knowledge, but more importantly, the increasing need for teachers to be

aware and prepared for the diversity of children in their classrooms, especially those who have experienced trauma and loss.

In order to make a difference, teachers need to teach with their hearts. As Palmer (1998) suggests, good teaching does not rely only on technique. Rather, good teaching results from the integrity and identity of the teacher, the integrity and identity which result from teachers being capable of talking about their inner selves, admitting to their weaknesses and fears, and using them to amount to their strengths and potentials. Children who are in need of extra support and care, and especially those who view schools as respite from their complex lives, need passionate teachers. As Wisehart (2004) explains, teachers who make it a priority to build caring relationships with their students and strive to create a positive classroom community foster the best outcomes for children. Most important, foster children need teachers who focus on developing strategies that grow from students' emerging strengths as learners rather than by dwelling on learning deficiencies. Thus, teaching with identity, integrity, and passion is crucial for foster care children's success in the classroom and beyond.

The development of the handbook required an exhaustive amount of research; however, it was an absolute pleasure knowing my work is for the common good for all teachers and foster children. A need for the project was established with the discovery of the minimal research in the field of foster children in education. As Jackson and Ajayi (2007) verify, the pathways by which children in the care system might overcome their childhood disadvantages through their education are underresearched. I began critically analyzing the available literature on foster children in education because of the increased need for greater examination of care systems and the critical role of education in the lives

of these children. From the lack of research and evidence on best practice approaches being used by policy-makers and professionals working in care and education sectors, I confirmed the need for this project.

A critical analysis of the literature was conducted, and I was able to summarize and outline the unique needs of foster children and cultivate the strategies, accommodations, and expectations teachers can use when working with foster children in their classrooms. The results of the critical analysis of the literature review culminated in the creation of the handbook, *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators*. This handbook was created to support teachers' knowledge of foster children and their needs as well as highlight some effective strategies that could be implemented within the classroom to address (a) positive attachment to teachers and adults, (b) socioemotional development, (c) resiliency, and (d) communication. The handbook targets early and elementary years because, as Reynolds et al. (2001) concur, early intervention during preschool and early elementary years are widely regarded as an effective way to prevent learning difficulties and to promote healthy development. As discussed by Ruff et al. (1990), there is a tendency for young foster children to manifest developmental delays and other physical, behavioural and cognitive difficulties if left unaddressed. Given the prevalence of early development implications and the large and increasing number of children in care, early intervention is key for these children's lifelong success.

I was fortunate to have such qualified and experienced education liaisons from a Family and Child Services agency in Ontario and a former child and youth worker/supervisor in Manitoba. The education liaisons with Family and Child Services

both individually have experience working within the education system as teachers for over 25 years, as well as the welfare system as liaisons with various schools across the Niagara region for over 10 years. Additionally, the former child and youth worker in Manitoba worked as a caseworker for over 30 years prior to working as a director managing a team of caseworkers for 15 years. With over 100 years of combined experience, they were an amazing contribution to this project.

Through the literature review, expert evaluations, and current research, this chapter has described the importance of a functional and practical *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators* for elementary teachers. After the findings were reviewed and collaborated into the handbook, Chapter Four was completed, which includes *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators*.

CHAPTER FOUR: FOSTER CHILDREN IN EDUCATION: RESOURCE HANDBOOK FOR ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS

After identifying the unique histories of foster care children and further researching the specific needs and adverse outcomes resulting from their histories, the ultimate goal of this project was to develop a practical resource handbook to educate elementary educators about foster children and to provide relevant information and strategies for supporting these students in the classroom. Following is a concise and practical handbook for teachers of foster care students. The handbook provides an accurate perspective, as its creation relied on current research as well as both caregiver and social worker input.

The lessons and activities in *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators* for elementary teachers are targeted at grade 4 students. With the majority of foster children ranging from kindergarten to grade 8, I chose grade 4 to focus on, taking into consideration social and emotional skills and development, learning level, and overall competency. Each lesson and activity will include modifications and suggestions within it when working with younger or older children.

FOSTER CHILDREN IN EDUCATION:

RESOURCE HANDBOOK FOR ELEMENTARY EDUCATORS

"Education was one of the few stabilities that I had in my life. My hope would be that a family would fill that role, but for me, it was education. That was the greatest gift. Everything else was taken away from me, but education wasn't. Even though it was a battle and a roller coaster, it was a sense of normalcy for me. It made the difference. For foster children, who lose their culture, sense of self, and identity, education is their ticket out. It's one of the few things no one can take away from them."
(Tovar, 2005)



Developed by: Mira Anna Zmiyiwsky

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Introduction

- Recognizing the complexity of adverse backgrounds of foster children, the negative effects of attachment disorder and socioemotional health problems is key to developing effective programs for this population of children.
- The ultimate goal in working with foster children outside and inside the school is to help them discover their identities, moral values, enhance their problem solving skills and social competencies, ultimately fostering their resiliency.
- It is important for adults who work with children in care to understand their histories and the corresponding negative mental and emotional effects from being removed from their parents and homes.
- It is crucial for teachers to be educated on how to best address the unique needs of foster care children in their classrooms. Teachers, along with the education system as a whole, play an integral and multifaceted role in supporting the foster child.
- Teachers have the power to have a lasting positive impact on the lives and education for all foster children.

With half a million children in care, most of whom (71 percent) are of school age, it is imperative that the educational outcomes for these youths improve (National Working Group on Foster Care and

Who is a Foster Child?

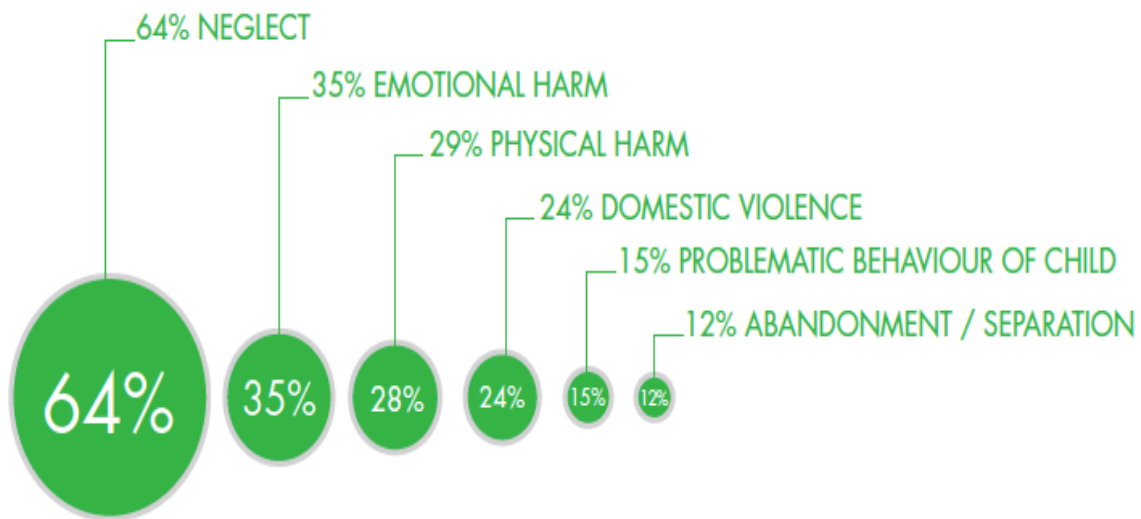
Children who have been legally removed from their natural or adoptive parents and placed with legally sanctioned caregivers on a temporary or permanent basis.

- According to Jee et al. (2010), children in foster care represent a population with specific needs due to their prior trauma, risk for adverse outcomes, and need for mental health care.
- Most importantly, despite the unfortunate circumstance that makes a child into a 'foster child'... these children are simply children in need of love, care, and security, just like any other child!
- The first step towards creating a positive learning environment and a successful educational experience for foster youths is the development of an understanding of foster youths' adverse backgrounds, the complexity of attachment disorder, social and emotional development, effective behavioural management, resiliency, and barriers to school success.

Common backgrounds

- Children who enter foster care have usually experienced multiple traumatic events committed by a caregiver; these events serve as the cause for removal from their homes (Oswald, Fegert, & Goldbeck, 2010).
- Each foster child's history is unique. However, the experience of multiple traumatic events that is common to foster youths increases the risk of social, emotional, and educational struggles.
- Most children in foster care have experienced early childhood trauma including child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, and impaired parenting, placing them at risk for long-term negative health and emotional outcomes (Felitti et al., 1998).
- According to Greeson et al. (2011), many children in the child welfare system have histories of recurrent interpersonal trauma perpetrated by caregivers early in life, often referred to as complex trauma.
- Not only are children taken away from their biological parents for one form of abuse or neglect, but many face poly-victimization as well.
- The term poly-victimization is often used to describe the experience of multiple forms of abuse, violence, or other interpersonal victimization.

- According to Flynn and Miller (2010), the reasons for admission to the care of Children's Aid are tracked in an important report on the care of children in Ontario. The most common reasons are:



Note that for most children, there are multiple reasons.

Attachment

- Resultant from foster children's adverse histories is the development of attachment disorder.

Attachment disorder is defined as "a disruption in the initial attachment formed between an infant and a primary caregiver that often leads to some type of disordered or disorganized attachment (Stinehart, Scott & Barfield, 2012)

- Many foster children will experience multiple placements and several temporary relationships, potentially preventing them from forming secure attachments that are crucial for developmental health (Bowlby, 1982).
 - Reactive Attachment Disorder is a more extreme psychiatric diagnosis for a group of children with the most significant and detrimental insecure attachments (Tobin, Wardi-Zonna, & Yezzi-Shareef, 2007).
 - Attachment disorder can cause foster children to behave in many different ways. Very young children may exhibit developmental delays, clingy and dependent behavior, temper tantrums, and withdrawal (McKellar, 2004).
 - Attachment theory must be understood by teachers and other adults working with foster children in order to comprehend the behaviours foster children exhibit.

The building of attachment with a foster child should be one of the main goals of a teacher. Considering their histories with adults, foster children have a tendency to not trust them, therefore not creating an attachment. Teachers can be the one adult a foster child builds a positive attachment with; that is why it is so important to establish a good bond with the child as soon as possible. These next two lesson plans will help foster a positive attachment with your student. In my experience, introducing the child to who you are, your childhood, your interests, your dreams, and so on, will make it easier for the child to find commonalities with you, trust you, and ultimately form an attachment with you. It is when they can relate to you and your life that they open up and become comfortable with you as their teacher. Furthermore, reading one-on-one with your student is an excellent way to build attachment. Key components including eye contact and quality time are essential in creating a bond. More tips on attachment are included in the lesson plans that follow.

Subject/Course: Health and Wellbeing
Grade level: Grade 4

Lesson Topic: Building attachment – one on one
Lesson Duration: On-going

*** This activity is to be done with the discretion of the teacher. Not all teachers will be comfortable with this activity plan.**

1. Lesson Learning Goal(s) Key Question: What do I want students to know and be able to do?

Knowledge and Understanding / Thinking / Communication / Application

- I want the child to know about my life, my background, and me.
- I want the child to be able to develop a trusting relationship with me as the teacher.
- I want the child to be able to recognize things we share and do not share in common.
- I want the child to know they can talk to me and confide in me with their feelings, thoughts, and concerns.

2. Assessment Key Question: How will I know each student has learned the concept(s)?

a) Indicator(s) of Lesson Learning Goals:

- Child will be attentive to the sharing of my life story – they will be able to retell parts of the story.
- Children will ask questions to obtain more details of parts of my life story.
- Students will respond to key story elements – ask questions, elaborate on my story, and connect to their own experiences.

b) Assessment Strategies and Tools: (Key Question: What will students be doing and what will I use to assess learning?)

- Observation and anecdotal notes

3. Differentiated Instruction Key Question: What will I do to assist individual learners or provide enrichment for others?

Accommodation and/or modification:

Assess the child, their cooperativeness, and their level of comfort with you. If necessary, have the foster parent or guardian sit in on the introduction meeting.

Extension:

Allow the child to ask you 5 questions about you and your life. Allow them to voice their curiosity in your life story.

4. Required teacher preparation/materials needed:

Instructional Plan

	Procedure	Accommodations/ Modifications
Time	<p>Setting the Stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This activity is to get to know your student, but more important, letting the student get to know you. Yes – we always make a brief introduction to our students at the beginning of the school year, but this exercise it to share more in-depth information with foster students in order to create a positive relationship full of trust, safety, camaraderie, care, and equality to ultimately build attachment. Attachment and bonding can be very hard to form with foster care children. There are many factors that affect why attachment and bonding can be difficult to form: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster children have often been through multiple transitions and losses (physically or emotionally). The more losses the child has experienced, the more difficult it is to trust the foster care system, family, and other adults that enter their lives. Many children in foster care suffer from some form of attachment disorder. Children with attachment disorder often do not easily trust and typically have an internal working model, which may include: a deep-seated feeling/belief that they are bad (the difference between guilt and toxic shame). In guilt one feels bad because he has done something wrong; toxic shame is the feeling that “I am wrong,” that adults and caregivers are not responsive and not trustworthy. Because of lack of trust he or she typically believes that his or her life is unsafe. <div data-bbox="420 1186 1094 1598"> <p>Teaching Tips for Attachment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Make Eye contact ✓ Smile and talk to the child ✓ Express warmth and touch ✓ Be sensitive and responsive ✓ Get in tune with the child ✓ Follow the child’s lead in play ✓ Read together ✓ Avoid overstimulation </div> <p>Core Learning Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everyone has a story; now it’s your turn to share your story with the child. Tell the child about your childhood – your positive and negative memories. Tell the child about your family – your mother, father, grandparents, guardians, brothers, sisters, pets, and so on. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell the child about your favourite activities – what did you like to do when you were their age? • Tell the child about your friends – your best friend and WHY he or she was your best friend. • Tell the child about your favourite games or school subjects. • Tell the child about your favourite teacher in grade school – what made him or her your favourite? Talk about the relationship you had with that teacher and what made him or her so special. • Tell the child about your life now – what did you do after high school, what were your dreams of what you wanted to “be” when you grew up? How did you fulfill those dreams? <p>Lesson Consolidation/Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow the child to think about 5 questions they want to ask you about your life. • Answer their questions providing you feel comfortable with what has been asked. 	<p>If the child doesn't feel comfortable asking you questions face-to-face, or can't think of any at the moment, allow them to write their questions down and leave their questions on your desk later.</p>

Subject/Course: Health and Wellbeing
Grade level: Grade 4

Lesson Topic: Story Time – Stellaluna
Lesson Duration: 60 mins

1. Lesson Learning Goal(s) Key Question: What do I want students to know and be able to do?

Knowledge and Understanding / Thinking / Communication / Application

- Students will be able to understand that everyone is different, but it doesn't make some people better than others.
- Students will be able to apply the concept/overall message of the story to their own lives.
- Students will understand the meaning of resiliency and being able to adapt to different environments.

2. Assessment Key Question: How will I know each student has learned the concept(s)?

a) Indicator(s) of Lesson Learning Goals:

- Students will be able to apply the message of the story to their own lives by writing and reflecting in their journals.
- Students will discuss their differences and understand that differences are to be celebrated.

b) Assessment Strategies and Tools: (Key Question: What will students be doing and what will I use to assess learning?)

- Students will be able to be attentive to the story being read.
- Observe student participation with class or one-on-one discussion.
- Checklist and anecdotal notes with child's focus, interest, and emotional response to the lesson/discussion.
- Assess student journals/stories.

3. Differentiated Instruction Key Question: What will I do to assist individual learners or provide enrichment for others?

Accommodation and/or modification:

When doing this story time activity with a foster child one-on-one, focus on eye contact with the child. This will build their attachment with you. While you're reading, take pauses to allow the child to ask questions or comment on the similarity of the story to their lives.

Extension:

Have the children write their own life stories. Have them also use animals to depict themselves and the people in their lives. Have them focus on instances where they have had to adapt to a new environment or be separated from their parents.

4. Required teacher preparation/materials needed:

- "Stellaluna" story book – free online video copy available at www.storylineonline.net.
- Student journals

Instructional Plan

Procedure

Accommodations/
Modifications

Time	<p>Setting the Stage:</p> <p>* Not only will this activity promote the idea of resilience, but done one-on-one, it will increase the attachment and bond between you and your student. Spending quality time with the student, reading to him or her, and making eye contact when talking are all strategies used for increased attachment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This activity can be done one-on-one with a foster child, or with the entire class. • Open with a discussion on “difference” and allow student(s) to talk about their own differences/what makes them unique or special, such as physical, familial, or personal differences (i.e. birth marks, physical abnormalities, child of same sex parents, sexual orientation, race, religion, unique hobbies, and so on). • Write the differences on the board or chart paper. • Talk about “adaptability.” Discuss how sometimes we need to adapt to different environments. We may need to adjust our behaviour or our actions when in these different environments (i.e. Someone else’s home, a church, the library, etc). <p>Core Learning Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Either one-on-one with the foster child or to the class as a whole, read aloud the storybook “Stellaluna.” • Have a discussion about the differences presented in the story between the bat and the birds. Ask students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How could these differences pose a challenge for both animals? ○ How did the bat and the birds adapt to a different environment in the story? ○ What are some positive things that came out of this adaptability (i.e. learned new tricks, tried new foods, etc). • If doing the activity with the whole class – have the children get into pairs and discuss situations where they have had to adapt to a new environment. Encourage them to talk about how they felt, and what they learned from this situation. • Have children write their own stories using animals of their choice to depict themselves and their families or friends. Have them write about a time they had to set aside their differences to adapt to a new environment. <p>Lesson Consolidation/Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind students that differences should be celebrated. When you meet new/different people, you have the opportunity to learn new things. • Part of being resilient is to be able to adapt to change in a positive and healthy way. 	<p>With older grades, you can have them each come up and write their own difference on the board or in a journal.</p> <p>If reading to foster child individually, be sure to make eye contact – this is a strategy to building attachment/bonds.</p> <p>If working one-on-one with a foster child, have them tell you (or write in their journal) the different family(ies) they have lived with and how they felt adapting to their new environment.</p>

How to Work With a Child With Reactive Attachment

(Smith, Saisan, & Segal, 2013)

Maintain consistent and predictable schedules and routines.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement routines such as daily walks to school, consistent play times, and bedtimes. This will help the child feel more comfortable and safe.
Set rules and boundaries for the child.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make the child aware of consequences that will occur if he or she disobeys rules. Follow through with your consequences if the child breaks rules. This will show the child that he or she has control in certain situations, such as behaving nicely to avoid repercussions.
Remain calm if the child misbehaves.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate a cool, calm behavior when you discipline the child. His or her reactive attachment disorder may cause the child to feel unsafe if you show anger or negative emotions.
Be physically and emotionally present after negative conflicts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide reassuring, caring gestures to the child after a conflict, such as hugging and saying loving words to show him or her you are reliable and can be trusted unconditionally.
Admit your mistakes to the child.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apologize when you have been frustrated and insensitive to the child and address any wrong behavior you may have demonstrated. This will help the child understand that he or she doesn't have to be perfect at all times to be loved and cared for.
Demonstrate physical signs of caring to the child.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most children who suffer from reactive attachment disorder rarely experience signs of physical affection. Provide them with gentle pats on the back, eye contact, and smiles. Do not perform extremely affectionate gestures such as kissing, hugging, or cuddling too soon. This can upset children who are recovering from abuse or trauma.
Spend quality time with the child.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perform activities together such as playing games, watching movies, or talking. This will show the child you are being attentive and will encourage him or her to be more comfortable with you.

Treat the child according to his or her emotional age.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Children with reactive attachment disorder may act younger than they actually are. Don't force them to perform age-appropriate actions before they are emotionally ready. For example, you may want to use a non-verbal method--like hugging them--when they experience a physical accident instead of soothing them verbally.
Show the child how to deal with every emotion in a healthy way.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Handle upsetting situations in a calm manner and express happiness when a situation goes well. Children with reactive attachment disorder are not familiar with ways to appropriately deal with feelings and emotions.
Practice consistent, healthy lifestyle habits.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engage the child in sports or exercise. The endorphins released will assist them in dealing with feelings of stress, anger and frustration caused by reactive attachment disorder.Provide the child with a healthy diet that consists of lots of fruits, vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains to optimize the health of their brain.

Socioemotional Development

- The quality of the early home environment plays a critical role in determining the development of very young children and in turn predicts their later cognitive, academic, and behavioural functioning (Whittaker et al., 2011). Whittaker et al. (2011) explain that it is during infancy when most rapid and complex development occurs.
- In addressing antisocial behaviour in youths, Hennig (2004) recommends that interventions should focus on providing reparative relationships that foster a healthy moral identity.
- The goal is to move individuals from insecure attachments to secure achieved attachments.
- Based on early experiences of abandonment, maltreatment, and/or uncommitted caregiving, foster children may be at increased risk for developing negative self-representations (Ackerman & Dozier, 2005).
- The presence of healthy relationships can help in combating these psychosocial deficits. Eisenberg (2004, p. 125) suggests that young people can benefit greatly from relationships with other adults and peers that model prosocial behaviours, and that the modeling of altruistic behaviour is more influential when there is a close bond between the child and the adult.

- Parents, teachers, and peers are very influential on the lives of all children. Especially with foster children, when individuals demonstrate good social skills, problem solving skills, autonomy, and competence; this will aid foster children in their social and emotional development.

Focusing on increasing the socioemotional skills and development of a foster child is critical. School is an environment where the most pro-social and pro-emotional modeling, encouragement, and development can be facilitated. Most children learn from observation and respond well to positive role modeling. By immersing foster children in an environment where positive social and emotional skills are cultivated and celebrated, they are more likely to respond in an affirmative manner. The following three lessons appeal to the academic, creative, and athletic sides of students. In the first activity, children are introduced to social skills and what they look and sound like. They will work in groups to carry out these social skills. In the second activity, children are to use modeling clay in sculpting their perceptions of themselves and their feelings. They are given the opportunity to learn about their inner-selves and share that realization with others. This is an effective way to help students recognize their inner thoughts and feelings in a constructive way. In the third activity, students are able to practice their social skills by working as a team to facilitate and carry out a game of soccer. Each child on the team has a role that they need to fulfill and, if they fail to do so, the game cannot go on. This is an important lesson for foster children to realize that their actions and decisions affect others and social skills are crucial for cooperation and collaboration.

Subject/Course: Health and Wellbeing
Grade level: Grade 4

Lesson Topic: Intro to Social Skills
Lesson Duration: 60 mins

1. Lesson Learning Goal(s) Key Question: What do I want students to know and be able to do?

Knowledge and Understanding / Thinking / Communication / Application

- Students will understand why social skills are important.
- Students will reflect on problems they have had when working in groups with others.
- Students will focus on different social skills and communicate what they “look” and “sound” like.
- Students will practice social skills with others.

2. Assessment Key Question: How will I know each student has learned the concept(s)?

a) Indicator(s) of Lesson Learning Goals:

- Students will be able to brainstorm a list of important social skills.
- Students will be able to work in groups or pairs to practice social skills.
- Students will be able to complete worksheet on what social skills look and sound like.

b) Assessment Strategies and Tools: (Key Question: What will students be doing and what will I use to assess learning?)

- Assess student worksheets.
- Checklist on participation and contribution to discussion.
- Anecdotal notes on student focus and effectiveness in working in groups/pairs.

3. Differentiated Instruction Key Question: What will I do to assist individual learners or provide enrichment for others?

Accommodation and/or modification:

If need be, work with children one-on-one.
For younger grades – preform activity as a class.

For older grades – have children participate in group and pair work.

Extension:

Have students get into groups and act out a scenario where they can demonstrate what developing a certain social skill looks and sounds like. If there is time, have them demonstrate more than one social skill.

4. Required teacher preparation/materials needed:

- Student reflection journals
- Chart paper/writing board

Instructional Plan

Procedure

Accommodations/

		Modifications
Time	<p>Setting the Stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before you can help students improve their social skills, they need to understand why these skills are important. • Open the discussion with the class/child and have students share problems they've experienced in cooperative learning teams. • Point out that most of these problems are caused by poor "social skills," sometimes known as "people skills." • Share with them that even adults need to work on their social skills from time to time! • Have them brainstorm lists of social skills to work on throughout the year. You might offer a few suggestions from the list below to get them started. <div data-bbox="500 659 935 1432"> <p style="text-align: center;">Social Skills</p> <p>taking turns praising (no put downs) sharing materials asking for help using quiet voices participating equally staying on task saying kinds things using names encouraging others waiting patiently communicating clearly accepting differences listening actively resolving conflicts following directions paraphrasing staying with the team sharing ideas recording ideas</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When teaching social skills, it's best to focus on just one skill at a time. You can choose the skill, or you can let your class decide which skill they need to work on first. • Select just one skill as your focus. You might want to work on a different skill each week (can create a "Skill of the Week" bulletin board). <p>Core Learning Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute the student worksheet. • Write the social skill in the box at the top. Then ask students to brainstorm what they should do and say when they are demonstrating the social skill. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The things that they DO are listed in the Looks Like column because this is what the skill looks like to others when it is demonstrated. • The things they SAY are listed in the Sounds Like column because this is what the skill sounds like to others. • Example: Skill - Praising • Looks like: Thumbs up, smiling, clapping. • Sounds like: "Terrific!", "Way to go!", "I knew you could do it!", "You're so smart!", "I like the way you...", and so on. • Practice the skill! After you discuss what the skill Looks Like and Sounds Like, you need to provide an immediate opportunity for practicing the skill. The best way to do this is to plan a structured cooperative learning activity to follow the social skills lesson. • For example, if you taught Active Listening as the social skill, you might follow up with a simple roundrobin activity. Roundrobin would be an ideal choice because each person takes a turn responding to a question, and everyone else should be listening actively to their response. • For example, have the entire class tell a story. Begin with the first student saying one word. Have the next student repeat that word then add another word. Then the next student repeats both previous words and adds his or her own, and so on. <p>Lesson Consolidation/Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask them to think about how well they have been using the social skill. If you have observed teams or individuals doing a good job with the skill, share your observations with the class. • Challenge students to continue to work on their use of the social skill as they complete the activity. Refer to the posted social skills T-chart if students have forgotten what the skill Looks Like and Sounds Like. • Give students the opportunity for personal journal writing. • Ask prompting questions for them to write about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How well was the social skill being used on your team? ○ What specific examples do you remember? ○ How did you personally use the social skill? What did you do and/or say? To whom? ○ How might you improve in using this skill next time? 	
<p>Adapted from: Candler, L. (2013). Teaching social skills . In <i>Teaching Resources</i>. Retrieved September 11, 2013, from http://www.lauracandler.com/strategies/socialskills.php</p>		

Name: _____ Date: _____

Working Together Skills

Looks Like	Sounds Like

Subject/Course: Health and Wellbeing
Grade level: Grade 4

Lesson Topic: Sculpting Feelings
Lesson Duration: 60 mins

1. Lesson Learning Goal(s) Key Question: What do I want students to know and be able to do?

Knowledge and Understanding / Thinking / Communication / Application

- Establish a positive and open environment.
- Verbally identify and express feelings.
- Increase self-awareness.

2. Assessment Key Question: How will I know each student has learned the concept(s)?

a) Indicator(s) of Lesson Learning Goals:

- Children are able to create a sculpture using any colours and forms they want.
- They are able to identify emotions and answer a series of questions individually.
- They are able to establish awareness of their feelings and share those with others.
- They are able to write a journal response on their creation and write a subsequent poem.

b) Assessment Strategies and Tools: (Key Question: What will students be doing and what will I use to assess learning?)

- Anecdotal notes on how the children work with creative tools and is able to connect with their inner thoughts and feelings.
- Create a checklist of whether the activity was effective in engaging an emotional response from children.
- Assess children's poems and journal responses.

3. Differentiated Instruction Key Question: What will I do to assist individual learners or provide enrichment for others?

Accommodation and/or modification:

With younger children, explain that the modeling clay or play dough is to be used to build a sculpture. Remind the children of ways to manipulate the clay; rolling, squeezing, poking, and so on. With older children, allow them to write and edit their own poems based on their clay creations, using poetic devices.

Extension:

Allow children the option to present/read aloud their poems to the rest of the group. Teacher could organize a "poetry café" where children sit in groups and have snacks and "snap" for the readers. This allows children to celebrate their work and share with others. Could also invite other teachers, parents, guardians, and foster parents to the event.

4. Required teacher preparation/materials needed:

- Coloured playdough or clay
- Pencil
- Student journals

Instructional Plan

	Procedure	Activity
Time	<p>Setting the Stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask children to build a sculpture that tells something about who the child is, what he/she likes/dislikes, or something the child wants you to know about him/her. Teacher should make their own sculpture at the same time to make children feel more comfortable. The colours chosen will represent emotions, but do not tell the child of this until the end of the activity. <p>Core Learning Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once the sculpture is complete, ask the following questions and have the children write down their answers. Later, write the answers in a poetic format; however the child does not know they are creating a poem so the language they use should be authentic but can be embellished by using poetic license. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do you want to call this sculpture? What feeling does each colour represent? What would the sculpture say to its/his/her mother, father, siblings, grandparents, foster parents, teacher, or friend? What is the sculpture's favourite food? What/who does it like and not like? Why? What does it want the world to know about it? Repeat the title. If you come up with any other relevant questions you want to ask to do now. Be creative in how the poem is visually created and only tell the child he/she has written a poem at the end of the exercise. The child will be surprised and excited that a poem was created. Read the poem back to the child and watch the delight when he/she realizes he/she have written a unique and special piece of work. Let the children keep the sculptures that inspired their work! <p>Lesson Consolidation/Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many foster children do not want to or do not know how to express their inner feelings. They need time to establish a rapport and trust with the teacher that will allow them to talk about their feelings. This exercise places the feelings into an external object that allows children to express his or her feelings through that object (not themselves). Children are able to identify with a collection of feelings using the created object as a springboard. It creates a safe way to tell the teacher or guardian some key feelings and themes that will come up again in later lessons/activities. This activity also allows for key information to be shared with the 	<p>The sculpture can be realistic or abstract.</p> <p>Reinforce to students that whatever the sculpture has to say is okay because it can say what it feels without having to worry about other people's reactions or feelings.</p> <p>Make sure your questions are appropriate and do not make the children feel uncomfortable.</p>

	<p>teacher that can be used as motivators for future activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sculpture acts as a concrete representation of children's inner feelings and lets them use the creative arts as a form of expression. 	
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Adapted from: Weitzman, S. (2007). *7 essential skills to teach children*. Bellville, ON: Self-published.

Lowenstein, L. (2011). Assessment & Treatment Activities for Children, Adolescents, and Families Vol 1. In *Liana Lowenstein*. Retrieved September 6, 2013, from <http://www.lianalowenstein.com/e-booklet.pdf>

Subject/Course: Health and Wellbeing
Grade level: Grade 4

Lesson Topic: Social Skills Soccer
Lesson Duration: 45 mins

1. Lesson Learning Goal(s) Key Question: What do I want students to know and be able to do?

Knowledge and Understanding / Thinking / Communication / Application

- Students will explain the importance of developing social skills.
- Students will participate in communication and engage in a shared activity.
- Students will apply social skill building to physical activity.

2. Assessment Key Question: How will I know each student has learned the concept(s)?

a) Indicator(s) of Lesson Learning Goals:

- Students will use the discussed strategies to improve the quality of the game.
- Students will work as a team in order to successfully carry out the activity.

b) Assessment Strategies and Tools: (Key Question: What will students be doing and what will I use to assess learning?)

- Checklist for participation to see if each child engages in all aspects of the activity.
- Anecdotal notes on effective teamwork, collaboration, and problem solving.

3. Differentiated Instruction Key Question: What will I do to assist individual learners or provide enrichment for others?

Accommodation and/or modification:

Provide a list of suggestions for students as options to help with their tasks. May have to initially scaffold objectives of the activity, and then slowly withdraw support as children show increased capacity to carry out on their own. This activity is appropriate for all age groups.

Extension:

Once students have mastered this activity, allow them to create their own unique game. Like the soccer game, every child needs to have a specific role to carry out.

4. Required teacher preparation/materials needed:

- Soccer balls
- Pylons
- Chart paper
- Markers

Instructional Plan

	Procedure	Accommodations/ Modifications
Time	Setting the Stage:	
5 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate a discussion with the class focusing on “how their school runs.” Ask: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What makes our school run? Who makes our school run? <i>Examples: Principals, teachers, custodians, students.</i> Explain how each of these individuals play a role in the success of the school. Discuss how responsibilities are shared and what strategies they use. <i>Examples: Communication, leadership, cooperation, kindness, and honesty.</i> 	
35 mins	<p>Core Learning Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Divide the class into 4 groups. Allow for 10 minutes for each group to complete the required task. Encourage the students to use the skills discussed in the opening discussion. After they have fulfilled the designated task, then have the groups share what they have created with the class. <p>Task – Soccer</p> <p>Groups</p> <p><u>Trainers</u> – Design activities to warm up the class.</p> <p><u>Spirit Group</u> – Design a cheer for the class.</p> <p><u>Coaches</u> – Ensure that the entire class participates and understands the expectations.</p> <p><u>Statisticians</u> – Record the scores, teams, and team names. Check in with the teacher to make sure the lesson goes as follows.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow the students time to play soccer. Each group must carry out their role during the game. 	
5 mins	<p>Lesson Consolidation/Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss what worked well and what needs improvement. How communication was important, with examples and so on. facilitate a discussion applying social skill development to the task. 	

Cooperative learning structures for Teachers

Helping students with social development!

Swap Meet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students individually generate ideas. At a signal, students find a partner and pairs swap one new idea and add to their notes. Once a pair has swapped ideas, each finds another partner and repeats the process.
Turn to Your Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The students turn to a partner sitting next to them to discuss an issue or question. The teacher then decides if a few pairs should share and discuss their thinking with the class.
Think, Pair, Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The students think individually about a question or issue and then discuss their thoughts with a partner. Pairs report their thinking to another pair or to the class. This strategy is especially appropriate when the students are asked to respond to complex questions.
Think, Pair, Write	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •As in “Think, Pair, Share” the students think individually before discussing their thoughts with a partner. Students then write what they are thinking. They might share their writing with another pair or with the class.
Think, Ink, Pair, Share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The students think about a question or topic for 1-2 minutes. They individually write down their thoughts. Students share with one or two partners about the topic for a given amount of time (be strict on the time so each one gets an equal amount of sharing time). One student shares the small-group comments with the entire group.
Heads Together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Groups of four students discuss a question or issue among themselves. The teacher then decides if a few groups should share their thinking with the class.
Group Brainstorming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Groups of four list as many ideas as they can about a question or topic as a group member records.
Tea Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pairs circulate around a classroom. On a given signal, they turn to the nearest pair and discuss a question or a suggested topic. This is repeated for several pairings.

(Collaborative/Cooperative Learning, 2009)

Behaviour Management

- According to Minahan and Rappaport (2012) “about 10% of the school population – or 9 to 13 million children – struggle with mental health problems” (p. 1).
- These children represent the most challenging students in our classrooms today, and as previously stated, children in foster care make up the majority of this population of students. Foster children’s mental health problems make it difficult for them to regulate their emotions and focus on learning (Minahan & Rappaport, 2012)
- One of the biggest issues in the classroom today is not the prevalence of children with behaviour and mental health issues, but that teachers are often ill equipped to respond to students’ challenging behaviours.
- Walter, Gouze, and Lim (2006) stress that “these educators receive minimal training in child and adolescent mental health issues or to develop interventions that can help reduce behavioural incidents and increase access to the curriculum” (p. 2).

Carr et al. (2002) argue that understanding the following critical concepts helps teachers choose how to intervene better with students' problematic behaviour:

- ✓ misbehavior is a symptom of an underlying cause,
- ✓ behaviour is communication,
- ✓ behaviour has a function,
- ✓ behaviour occurs in patterns,
- ✓ the only behaviour teachers can control is their own,
- ✓ and behaviour can be changed (Car et al., 2002).

- Car et al. (2002) argue that if a student is displaying problematic, maladaptive behavior, it is a symptom of an underdeveloped skill. Thus, teachers have a large responsibility to assist foster children in developing these critical skills (since children spend most of their waking hours at school).
- TRY TO AVOID USING MEDICAL LANGUAGE WHEN DESCRIBING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOUR.
- ❖ *“The language of disorders does not help identify those causes of behaviour problems over which teachers have control; second, this language has little to say*

about what teachers should do for children; and, third, this language can dehumanize children” (Scarlett, 1998, p. 14).

- ❖ The most important reason why educators and school staff should not use medical terminology to define children’s behaviour is the risk of perpetuating negative labels. Scarlett (1998) argues that labels make us look at children with problems more in terms of their being problems and less in terms of their being children!
- The way teachers approach misbehaviour in their classrooms is crucial. Each teacher brings with them their own beliefs and thoughts about behaviour management, either learned from their teacher education program or emanating from their teaching practice – SOME WORK AND SOME DO NOT.

“Good discipline is not just punishing or enforcing rules. It is liking children and letting them see that they are liked” (Stone, 1969, p. 7).

Scarlett (1998). Teachers need to be positive, respectful, and nurturing toward children rather than ridiculing or punishing.



Self-esteem is necessary for children to outgrow their behaviour problems. It is important to set limits and be firm with a clear emphasis on the importance of guiding children, not disciplining them (Scarlett, 1998).

Behaviour Management Principles (Behaviour Management for Foster Carers, 2010)	
✓	Seeking to reward good behaviour
✓	Adopting a non-confrontational approach
✓	Establishing a good relationship/rapport with children based on mutual respect
✓	Establishing rules which are consistent, explicit, and applicable to all children
✓	Acknowledging and appreciating the past life experiences which children bring
✓	The use of age, and developmental stage-appropriate sanctions – but only when necessary, not as routine
✓	Receiving training which covers both the origins of behaviour and standard techniques/strategies
✓	Having access to resources
✓	Working within a multi-agency context

(Services for Children and Young People, 2010)

- ❖ The aim is to always reduce and/or eradicate behaviours by responding in a positive and consistent manner (p. 5).

Behaviour Management Guidelines		
Supportive Environment	A supportive environment ensures children get their needs met when they use socially acceptable behaviours. It reduces a child's need to use problem behaviours to obtain an adult response.	Adults in a supportive environment: a) Acknowledge the child's abilities and accomplishments b) Notice what the child does right and encourage more of that behaviour c) Balance predictability and consistency with an ability to respond quickly to changes in the child's life and behaviour d) Recognize stressful circumstances (i.e., poor sleep, hunger, illness, parental visits, or court dates) and make reasonable adjustments in expectations for the child
Skill Development	Adults increase behavioural control skills in children by:	a) Explaining what is expected b) Redirecting ineffective behaviour c) Offering choices d) Modeling how to negotiate and problem solve e) Supporting the child's efforts to effectively control her/his own behaviour f) Being aware of and managing their own responses to challenging behaviours g) Providing a daily structure which supports the child's need for consistency h) Developing a list of response options and matching the intensity of the adult response to the seriousness of the child's behaviour i) Giving consequences for unacceptable behaviour j) Encouraging each child to be appropriately involved in school and community activities k) Making sure each child has opportunities to form significant, positive friendships and family relationships
Health Care	Prompt assessment and	Adults ensure appropriate health care by:

	<p>treatment of any ongoing or suspected medical condition allows adults to better understand what behaviours can reasonably be expected of a child.</p>	<p>a) Acting on concerns they have about a child's health b) Educating themselves on the nature of the child's illness or condition and its expected effects on the child's behaviour c) Educating themselves about prescribed medications and possible side effects</p>
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(Behaviour Management for Foster Carers, 2010)



Short-term strategies for promoting positive behaviour

- ✓ Be a good role model
- ✓ Listen and ask questions
- ✓ Use positive reinforcement
- ✓ Focus on the child's strengths, not behaviour
- ✓ Reward good behaviour
- ✓ Establish routines
- ✓ Encourage shared learning
- ✓ Promote privileges
- ✓ Prepare yourself for difficult situations – avoid a battle
- ✓ Allow time to listen and acknowledge anger
- ✓ Set limits and stick with them
- ✓ Create a calm, safe environment

Longerterm strategies for promoting positive behaviour

- ✓ Build a positive relationship – show trust and respect
- ✓ Be consistent – this shows that your rules and expectations are fair
- ✓ Communicate – listen to and respond

(Department of Communities, Child Safety, and Disability Services, 2012)

It is not uncommon for foster children to suffer with mental health and behavioural issues. From the combination of their sometimes-devastating prenatal conditions, adverse backgrounds, their issues with attachment, and their socioemotional development, it is no surprise that foster children have a tendency to demonstrate mental and behavioural struggles due to their biological make-up, or common feelings of anger, sadness, and resentment. Many teachers are not able to deal with these behavioural issues in the classroom. When working with a foster child, or any child for that matter, it is important to begin with the basics in addressing behavioural concerns. The following two lessons address bad and smart choices and dealing with strong or overwhelming emotions. In the first lesson, children are introduced to first recognize what constitutes bad and smart choices, for some have difficulties knowing the differences between the two. By discussing examples of each type of decision, children are more likely to be able to identify between good and bad. In the second lesson, children are encouraged to recognize strong emotions and assisted in finding ways to control these feelings. Three major steps toward dealing with emotions are discussed: understanding, processing, and resolving. They will learn that every individual is born with an inner-strength that helps them reach their full potential. These strengths include the power of choice, intelligence, talents, skills, and so on. Once children are able to identify when they feel strong negative emotions and understand how to deal with these emotions, they are able to have much better control over their behaviours.

Subject/Course: Health and Wellbeing
Grade level: Grade 4

Lesson Topic: Bad vs. Smart Choices
Lesson Duration: 60 mins

1. Lesson Learning Goal(s) Key Question: What do I want students to know and be able to do?

Knowledge and Understanding / Thinking / Communication / Application

- Students will understand the meaning of the words “smart” and “bad.”
- Students will understand what it means to make a **decision**.
- Students will be able to recognize good and bad decisions in “Three Little Pigs.”
- Students will be able to understand that they have choices for their actions.
- Students will be able to understand that there are different consequences to different actions.

2. Assessment Key Question: How will I know each student has learned the concept(s)?

a) Indicator(s) of Lesson Learning Goals:

- Students will be able to identify a good decision.
- Students will be able to describe a situation and what types of choices they have made.
- Students will be able to recognize the difference between a good choice and a bad choice.

b) Assessment Strategies and Tools: (Key Question: What will students be doing and what will I use to assess learning?)

- Observe student participation in group discussion and answering questions throughout the story.
- Make anecdotal notes on student focus and contribution.
- Assess completion of student behaviour log sheet.

3. Differentiated Instruction Key Question: What will I do to assist individual learners or provide enrichment for others?

Accommodation and/or modification:

For older grades, choose a book that is more advanced or has a more age-relative plot line.
Follow the same procedure with the different story.

Extension:

Students can extend this lesson as an at-home activity by choosing their own books and documenting the choices the main characters had to make. They can assess the choices made and chart them under “good choices” and “bad choices” and discuss what they would have done if they were in that character’s situation.

4. Required teacher preparation/materials needed:

- “The Three Little Pigs”
- Behaviour Log Sheet

Instructional Plan

	Procedure	Accommodations/ Modifications
Time	<p>Setting the Stage:</p> <p>* Students who are diagnosed with behavioural disorders often make rash decisions, and in turn do not weigh the consequences of their decision. Their environment, peers, and inability to deal with their emotions and/or stress can easily influence these students. This lesson will help younger students recognize the need to analyze the outcome of their decisions and understand that for every action there is a consequence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin by activating students' prior knowledge and ask thought-provoking questions and write student answers on the board. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is a decision? ○ What is a consequence? ○ What could happen if a good decision is made? ○ What could possibly happen if a bad decision is made? • Have students share some decisions they have had to recently make (i.e., books to read, games to play at recess, etc). • As a class, discuss these student-driven decisions and discuss the "smart choice" and "bad choice." <p>Core Learning Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the familiar story "The Three Little Pigs" aloud. • Throughout the story, stop every time a pig has to make a decision. As a class, analyze the choices and their consequences. • Discuss how the pig who made his house of brick made a smart decision, bad decisions the wolf made, and so on. <p>Lesson Consolidation/Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with a log sheet to fill out, and keep track of the main decisions that they make throughout the week. Individually they will give themselves a (+) for making a smart choice, and a (-) for failing to fully think about their choices. • At the end of the week, have students share their logbook observations and choices they made. • Either one-on-one or as a class, help students who may have not made the right decision when given a choice review what their options were and discuss what they could have done to make it a "good" decision. 	<p>IF students have a hard time verbally describing their choices, they can act them out or draw a picture.</p>

Adapted from: McIntyre, T. (2013). *The Survival Guide for Kids with Behavior Challenges: How to Make Good Choices and Stay Out of Trouble*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing.

Subject/Course: Health and Wellbeing
Grade level: Grade 4

Lesson Topic: Dealing with Emotions – Your Inner Ninja
Lesson Duration: 60 mins

1. Lesson Learning Goal(s) Key Question: What do I want students to know and be able to do?

Knowledge and Understanding / Thinking / Communication / Application

- Students will get an overview on dealing with strong emotions.
- Students will recognize and understand the 3 key components in dealing with emotions: 1) understand, 2) process, and 3) resolve.
- Students will understand that everyone is born with inner strength to help them reach their full potential. They are equipped with the abilities to bring that potential forward, (i.e., the power of choice, intelligence, talents, and skills).
- Students will identify practices to help them calm down, come back to their positive place, and build resiliency.

2. Assessment Key Question: How will I know each student has learned the concept(s)?

a) Indicator(s) of Lesson Learning Goals:

- Students are focused on the discussion and are contributing to examples shared and written on the board.
- Students are able to identify different situations and the emotions that come from them.
- Students are able to reflect and write in their journals about how they felt after the lesson.
- Students are able to answer the questions on the worksheet.

b) Assessment Strategies and Tools: (Key Question: What will students be doing and what will I use to assess learning?)

- Assess worksheets.
- Observe – anecdotal notes on how students respond to lesson and activity.
- Checklist on participation in discussion.

3. Differentiated Instruction Key Question: What will I do to assist individual learners or provide enrichment for others?

Accommodation and/or modification:

For students who do not care to participate – allow them to write down their emotions and answers on a piece of paper or in their journals. Sometimes students feel uncomfortable talking aloud about their feelings and how they deal with intense emotions (if they do not yet know how).

For younger grades – Have students draw out different emotions using faces and colour.

Extension:

Have students get creative and draw their “inner ninjas”. Have them create a comic strip on a situation where they would use their “upstairs brain” and one where they would use their “downstairs brain.”

4. Required teacher preparation/materials needed:

- Worksheets
- Chart paper
- Student journals

Instructional Plan

	Procedure	Accommodations/ Modifications
Time	<p>Setting the Stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss with child that sometimes we cover up feelings that don't feel comfortable (i.e., when we are afraid, sometimes we cover it up with anger). • Discuss some strategies to deal with strong emotions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 1. Take 10 deep breaths. ○ 2. Reach out to someone who cares about you, and talk about what's going on. ○ 3. Run, jump, sing, or dance your way into a better mood. ○ 4. Appreciate something good about yourself and your life. ○ 5. Write in a gratitude journal. ○ 6. Remember you are in charge of how you respond; your emotions can let you know how you feel, but they don't have to be in charge. <p>Core Learning Activity:</p> <p>Discuss understanding feelings and steps for processing and resolving them:</p> <p>STEP ONE – Understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss that different emotions are natural, and OK, and part of being human. Some emotions can take control of the mind and make us react in ways we may regret. Discuss with the child that intense emotions become a problem when we hurt ourselves, someone else, or property (i.e., when we are angry). Finding good ways to work through emotions is helpful. • To understand different emotions, list on the board circumstances that cause a person to feel that emotion (i.e., Feeling angry when someone hurts you physically, puts you down, and so on). Ask the child which circumstance affects them the most. <p>STEP TWO – Processing/Working through emotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the above-mentioned examples, write down on the board the child's ideas of how they deal with different situations, like, for example, "notice when you are angry, play a game outside, find a quiet place to think things over, read a book, think about happy 	

	<p>memories, speak to someone you trust.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach the child the “balloon breath”: inhale slowly as if blowing up a balloon in their tummy. Exhale and notice the balloon fall. Have them repeat 5-10 times and observe how they feel. <p>STEP THREE – Resolving the emotion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neuroscientist Dan Siegel presents two choices to handle strong emotions like anger: Discuss both with the class. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Using your “upstairs brain,” which is responsible for good decisions and clear thinking. List some examples of making good decisions (take the child’s input). For example, talk and listen to the person you feel angry with, talk to a friend or adult you trust, accept that you can’t change things, apologize, and so on. Explain to students that with these choices, they are using their upstairs brain (a.k.a. prefrontal cortex) <u>OR</u> ○ Using your “downstairs brain,” which takes over when you are angry or afraid (fight or flight). List some negative examples like hitting, blaming, arguing, breaking something, and so on. Explain that when emotions are out of control, students are being told what to do by their downstairs brain (the amygdala). • Engage students to discuss the consequences for both approaches. Reinforce that you have the power to choose <i>reacting</i> without thinking (using downstairs brain) or <i>responding</i> after thinking (using upstairs brain). • Make a visual chart for clearer understanding. <p>TAKING CHARGE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once you calm down from an intense emotion, your upstairs brain is working well. At this point you can understand the original issue that led to the emotion, call upon the NINJA inside of you, and take action! • Any intense emotion has to be first resolved within, before it can be resolved interpersonally! • There are two parts to your inner ninja taking action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inside Myself: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teach students that everyone has a creative spark inside themselves to help them be their best self. ▪ <i>You need to decide that you want to feel better, then tap into your inner power to help deal with the negative feelings.</i> ▪ <i>By practicing the message below, you will have access to more positive thoughts and help change the way you feel. This exercise is a good way to develop this skill by declaring to yourself: “<u>Anger (or any negative emotion) leave me now. I let you go!</u>” OR “<u>Negativity, leave me now. I let you go!</u>”</i> ○ Person to Person: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ After some of the charge of the emotion has diminished, it’s easier to resolve the situation. Here are some ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Calmly speak to the person as you tell them how you feel, try to understand how they feel too. 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look for the best in that person. Changing the way you think about someone can change the way you feel. ➤ Tell the person how you want to be treated in the future. ➤ Forgiveness means that you feel OK about things now; you don't really feel like blaming the person anymore. Are you ready to forgive? ➤ If you can't change the situation, look for what you have learned from this negative experience. For example, "I can't change the way she reacts, but this taught me that I can choose to be around people who are nicer." <p>Lesson Consolidation/Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students fill out their worksheets on dealing with emotions. • Have them reflect on recent situations that evoked a strong negative emotion and how they dealt with those feelings. • Allow students to reflect in their journals on the lesson and activities. 	
<p>Adapted from: Taran, R. (2013, March). Building Social and Emotional Skills in Elementary Students: Emotional Management. In <i>Edutopia</i>. Retrieved October 8, 2013, from http://www.edutopia.org/blog/project-happiness-ninja-mastery-randy-taran</p>		

WORKSHEET:

FOR YOUNGER GRADES, PART 1:













Write a sentence or two to discuss and describe a recent situation that prompted using the skills listed below to manage emotions:

SITUATION

People involved (classmates, siblings, parents, teacher, friends, pets, etc.)	Circle the emotions that occurred.
	<div>Anger</div> <div>Sadness</div> <div>Jealousy</div> <div>Revenge</div> <div>Other _____ Not sure</div>







PART 2) a

DISENGAGING SKILLS

Check each phrase used	Disengaging Phrase	Circle how this worked for you. Circle One.
	I'm starting to feel _____.	  
	I need to calm down.	  
	So I'm leaving.	  
	Let's talk later.	  

PART 2) b

TAKING CHARGE SKILLS

Check each phrase used	Taking Charge Phrase	Circle how this worked for you. Circle One.
	1. _____, leave me now (negative emotion, i.e., anger).	  
	2. I let you go!	  

FOR OLDER GRADES

What Do I Do With How I Feel?

1. Recall a recent time when you felt very happy. What made you feel that way?

2. Choose a word from the box to complete each sentence:

Angry	
Later	Leaving
Down	

- a. I'm starting to feel _____.
- b. I need to calm _____.
- c. So I'm _____.
- d. Let's talk _____.

3. Tap into your inner power and pick the one that could help you most:

Anger
 Sadness
 Jealousy
 Revenge

“ _____, leave me now. I let you go!”

4. Circle the box that describes how you feel today or write your own.

a) Most of the time, at school I feel...

Happy	Bored	Sad	(other)
-------	-------	-----	---------

Because _____.

b) Most of the time, at home I feel...

Happy	Bored	Sad	(other)
-------	-------	-----	---------

Because _____.

Resiliency

“The basic human capacity, nascent in all children, to face, overcome and be strengthened by or even transformed by the adversities of life” (Grotberg, 1997, p. 10).

Resiliency is an outcome produced by the following personal traits: social competency, problem solving skills, autonomy, optimism, and ability to recruit social support (Craven & Lee, 2010).

A capacity that allows a person to prevent, minimize, or overcome the damaging effects of adversity (Gilligan, 2009).

What is “RESILIENCY”?

What makes a child RESILIENT?

“The amount of negative influence experienced by children in foster care is a function of how resilient they are and the extent to which they can endure and grow from stressful experiences” (Craven and Lee, 2010, p. 214).

Resiliency cannot be accomplished by removal of all risk but can be realized in the careful managing of risk; it can be encouraged through the positive use of stress to improve competencies (Newman & Blackburn, 2002; Rutter, 2006).

“Developmental feature that captures individual differences in adaptation to specific risk contexts or developmental hazards, including maltreatment and foster care placement” (Leve et al., 2009, p. 1871).

- Hass and Graydon (2009) state that resiliency is often conceptualized in two broad categories: personal strengths and environmental protective factors.
 - ❖ **Personal strengths** includes categories such as: social competence, problem solving, autonomy, and sense of purpose.
 - ❖ **Environmental protective factors** are present in the family, community, or schools and include caring relationships, clear and positive expectations by family members, educators, and community members for achievement, and opportunities to participate and contribute (Hass & Graydon, 2009).

There are many lists of protective assets associated with resiliency in young people; the main three discussed by researchers and professionals are:

- ✓ self-esteem,
- ✓ self-efficacy, and
- ✓ self-awareness (Woodier, 2011).

WHY ARE SOME CHILDREN MORE RESILIENT THAN OTHERS?

- ❖ The answer lies in the interaction between the nature of risk and adversity involved, the qualities and experiences of the young person, and the quality of the relationships and environment in which the young person is growing up (Benight & Bandura, 2004).
- ❖ While intrinsic attributes are important, it is equally important to acknowledge that resilience emerges in a supportive context (Woodier, 2011).

- ❖ *Even when children lack early experiences of nurturing relationships, teachers and other caregivers can have an important role in helping to build resiliency by nurturing positive values (Woodier, 2011, p. 277).*

Resiliency is something every individual possesses; however, it is the levels of resiliency one has that differ in how they deal with adverse situations. Foster children, no doubt, have experienced multiple adversities, beginning with neglect or abuse, followed by the removal from their parents and homes. This is a population of children that are in dire need of higher levels of resiliency in order to overcome their hardship. To build resiliency, one needs to assess their personal strengths and their environmental protective factors. In the following two lessons, a thorough introduction of resiliency is established along with the main skills needed to be resilient. In the second lesson, children are able to research the lives of someone who demonstrates an exceptional degree of resiliency based on seven different aspects. This allows foster children, especially, to understand that many individuals go through different kinds of adversities, all resulting in different outcomes. The commonality among all of the successful people is their level of resilience and how they were capable of “bouncing back.” This exercise will give hope and motivation to students who suffer from adversities, to stand tall and take control of their futures.

Subject/Course: Health and Wellbeing

Lesson Topic: Introduction to Resiliency – Learning to bounce back!

Grade level: Grade 4

Lesson Duration: 3 classes of 60 mins

1. Lesson Learning Goal(s) Key Question: What do I want students to know and be able to do?

Knowledge and Understanding / Thinking / Communication / Application

- In this lesson, students learn to define the term “RESILIENCE.”
- They discuss the areas of health (social, emotional, physical and spiritual) while also participating in their own resilience test.
- Students then look at a variety of stressful scenarios and come up with some strategies that would assist them if they happened to find themselves in that position.

2. Assessment Key Question: How will I know each student has learned the concept(s)?

a) Indicator(s) of Lesson Learning Goals:

- Guided group discussion regarding “resiliency” and areas of health and knowledge that are associated with both.
- Teacher observation: Listen as the students share their ideas on resiliency and health.

b) Assessment Strategies and Tools: (Key Question: What will students be doing and what will I use to assess learning?)

- Anecdotal – field notes and observation of students discussing resilience strategies.
- An observation checklist will be used to indicate how students are able to recognize different areas of health and the skills needed to build resiliency.
 - You will know how students’ skills are developing by listening to their discussions during the reciprocal teaching session.
 - Complete the “Teacher Observation” sheet.
- Develop a “resilience plan.”

3. Differentiated Instruction Key Question: What will I do to assist individual learners or provide enrichment for others?

Accommodation and/or modification:

Give out handouts for students with information on resiliency who want/need them.

Can work one-on-one with foster student and modify scenarios so they are more familiar to their lives (i.e., “You are told you are moving to a different foster home when you are just getting settled into this one... etc”).

Extension:

Have students write a story in their journal of a time they showed resiliency skills. How did this help or not help their situation? What would they have done differently if they had another chance?

4. Required teacher preparation/materials needed:

- Chart paper
- Computers for online resiliency quiz

- Reflection journals

Instructional Plan

	Procedure	Activity
Time	<p>Setting the Stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss areas of Health below and ask students to give themselves a rating out of 10 for each category. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Physical – your actual body, illness, wellness, being fit. ○ Mental/Emotional – learning, feelings, mental well-being. ○ Social – interactions with other people. ○ Spiritual – links to mental /emotional, understanding of place in world, belief in higher being, finding meaning in life. • Discuss Interesting Statistics/Facts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Percent of Canadians who have a diagnosed mental illness. ○ What age group has the highest prevalence? ○ How many deaths per year are suicides (%)? ○ Most common mental illnesses: anxiety disorders, affective/mood disorders (including depression and bipolar), substance use disorders. ○ Factors contributing to mental illness: genetics, early development, trauma, drugs, disease/injury, society. <p>Core Learning Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to overcome stressors – Those with good resilience skills tend to overcome stressors in their lives easier than those that don't. So what is resilience? • Define Resilience: “The ability to cope with stress and catastrophe. ‘Bouncing back’ to normal function after a trauma.” <p><u>An Understanding that Setbacks are Part of Life:</u> Another characteristic of resilience is the understanding that life is full of challenges. While we can't avoid many of these problems, we can stay open, flexible, and willing to adapt to change.</p> <p>SKILLS FOR RESILIENCY</p> <p>** After reviewing the “skills for resiliency” and “building your resiliency” sections below, play for students the 2005 film “Terry.” This film shows the life, struggles, goals, and mission of Canadian hero Terry Fox. It depicts for students the meaning of resiliency with the famous true story of Terry Fox as an example.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students take notes during the film giving examples of his: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Internal control, ✓ strong problem-solving skills, ✓ social connections, ✓ being a survivor, and ✓ asking for help. • Following the film, discuss with students how Fox: 	

- ✓ Built a positive belief in his abilities,
- ✓ Built a sense of purpose in his life,
- ✓ Built a strong social network,
- ✓ Embraced change,
- ✓ Was optimistic,
- ✓ Nurtured himself,
- ✓ Developed problem-solving skills, and
- ✓ Established his goals.

Internal Control:

Commonly, resilient people tend to have “internal control.” They believe that the actions they take will affect the outcome of an event. It is important to feel as if we have the power to make choices that will affect our situation, our ability to cope, and our future.

Strong Problem-Solving Skills:

Problem-solving skills are crucial. When a crisis happens, resilient people are able to think of a solution that will lead to a safe/positive outcome. In scary situations, people sometimes draw a blank. They aren’t able to remember details or take advantage of opportunities. Resilient individuals, on the other hand, are able to calmly and rationally look at the problem and think of a successful solution.

Having Strong Social Connections:

Whenever you're dealing with a problem, it's important to have people who can offer support. Talking about the challenges you are facing can be a good way to get perspective, look for new solutions, or just to express your emotions. Teachers, friends, family member, classmates, and other support groups can all be sources of social connectivity.

Identifying as a Survivor, Not a Victim:

When dealing with any kind of crisis, it is important to view yourself as a survivor. Try not to think like a victim of circumstance and instead look for ways to resolve the problem. While the situation may be unavoidable, you can still stay focused on a positive outcome.

Being Able to Ask for Help:

It is critical to know when to ask for help! During a crisis, people can benefit from the help of psychologists and counselors specially trained to deal with crisis situations.

BUILDING YOUR RESILIENCE

1. Build Positive Beliefs in Your Abilities

Self-esteem plays an important role in coping with stress and recovering from difficult events. Remind yourself of your strengths and accomplishments. Becoming more confident about your own ability to respond and deal with crisis is a great way to build resilience for the future.

2. Find a Sense of Purpose in Your Life

In the face of crisis or tragedy, finding a sense of purpose can play an important role in recovery. This might involve becoming involved in your community, cultivating your spirituality, or participating in activities that are meaningful to you.

3. Develop a Strong Social Network

Having caring, supportive people around you acts as a protective factor during times of crisis. It is important to have people you can confide in. While simply talking about a situation with a friend or loved one will not make troubles go away, it allows you to share your feelings, gain support, receive positive feedback, and come up with possible solutions to your problems.

4. Embrace Change

Flexibility is an essential part of resilience. By learning how to be more adaptable, you'll be better equipped to respond when faced with a life crisis. Resilient people often utilize these events as an opportunity to branch out in new directions. While some people may be crushed by abrupt changes, highly resilient individuals are able to adapt and thrive.

5. Be Optimistic

Staying optimistic during dark periods can be difficult, but maintaining a hopeful outlook is an important part of resiliency. Positive thinking does not mean ignoring the problem in order to focus on positive outcomes. It means understanding that setbacks are transient and that you have the skills and abilities to combat the challenges you face. What you are dealing with may be difficult, but it is important to remain hopeful and positive about a brighter future.

6. Nurture Yourself

When you're stressed, it can be all too easy to neglect your own needs. Losing your appetite, ignoring exercise, and not getting enough sleep are all common reactions to a crisis situation. Focus on building your self-nurturance skills, even when you are troubled. Make time for activities that you enjoy. By taking care of your own needs, you can boost your overall health and resilience and be fully ready to face life's challenges.

7. Develop Your Problem-Solving Skills

Research suggests that people who are able come up with solutions to a problem are better able to cope with problems than those who cannot. Whenever you encounter a new challenge, make a quick list of some of the potential ways you could solve the problem. Experiment with different strategies and focus on developing a logical way to work through common problems. By practicing your problem-solving skills on a regular basis, you will be better prepared to cope when a serious challenge emerges.

8. Establish Goals

Crisis situations are daunting. They may even seem insurmountable. Resilient people are able to view these situations in a realistic way, and then set reasonable goals to deal with the problem. When you find yourself becoming overwhelmed by a situation, take a step back to simply assess what is before you. Brainstorm possible solutions, and then break them down into manageable steps.

4. Now ask students to access the link below and conduct their own resilience test

http://stress.about.com/library/resilience/bl_resilience_quiz.htm

5. Now ask the kids, based on their results, how they would answer the following questions:

- Were the results expected or surprising? Why?
- What resilience skills are your strengths? (Which ones are you already

	<p>good at?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Which resilience skills do you need to work on? <p>6. Ask kids to think about some strategies that will help them BOUNCE back in these hypothetical stressful scenarios:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Scenario A.</u> Your parents have just told you that you are moving to a new city. You have lots of friends here and are happy at your school. You plead with them to stay but they have made up their minds. You are dreading the move. What can you do to help yourself feel better? • <u>Scenario B.</u> You have had a falling out with your friend. They refuse to make up and have been talking about you to others. It is worrying you and you don't want to tell anyone in case it angers them further. You are losing sleep and imagining the worst. What can you do to help yourself feel better? • <u>Scenario C.</u> You find yourself worrying about everything: your homework, your friendships, your looks. You are beginning to feel you are hopeless and can't do anything right. What can you do to help yourself feel better? <p>Lesson Consolidation/Debriefing with Students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have students share their responses with the rest of the class and discuss whether the strategies that they have chosen are the best ones. • Record BOUNCING back strategies on a resilience wall chart as they say them. • Have students write a journal entry in which they explain their thoughts about resiliency and how they can work to build their resiliency skills in themselves. 	
<p>"Terry" – 2005 film (accessible online and through most libraries).</p> <p>Cherry, K. (n.d.). 10 Ways to Become More Resilient. In <i>About Psychology</i>. Retrieved October 21, 2013, from http://psychology.about.com/od/crisiscounseling/tp/become-more-resilient.htm</p> <p>Resilience Lesson – Building Skills to Bounce Back (2003, May). In <i>Australian Curriculum Lessons</i>. Retrieved September 17, 2013, from http://www.australiancurriculumlessons.com.au/2013/05/15/resilience-lesson-building-skills-to-bounce-back/</p>		

Subject/Course: Health and Wellbeing
Grade level: Grade 4

Lesson Topic: Seven Resiliencies
Lesson Duration: 60 mins

1. Lesson Learning Goal(s) Key Question: What do I want students to know and be able to do?

Knowledge and Understanding / Thinking / Communication / Application

- Students will learn and understand seven characteristics that make people resilient (resiliencies).
- Students will examine the life of a famous or historical person in terms of the seven resiliencies.
- Students will select and research the life of a famous historical person and analyze his or her accomplishments in terms of the seven resiliencies.
- Students will apply the seven resiliencies to their own lives.

2. Assessment Key Question: How will I know each student has learned the concept(s)?

a) Indicator(s) of Lesson Learning Goals:

- Students will become knowledgeable of the life of a famous person or person in their lives they believe is highly resilient.
- Students will be able to describe the individual and how they show examples of the seven resiliencies.
- Students will be able to present their chosen individual to the class or teacher.

b) Assessment Strategies and Tools: (Key Question: What will students be doing and what will I use to assess learning?)

- Anecdotal notes on student participation and contribution to discussion.
- Checklist on student's utilization of class time for research.
- Assess student worksheet.

3. Differentiated Instruction Key Question: What will I do to assist individual learners or provide enrichment for others?

Accommodation and/or modification:

For younger grades – allow student to select a family member, friend, or other member of their community to report on. They could also look at the resiliency characteristics of a cartoon character, TV show actor, and so on to complete the assignment.

Extension:

Students could make a poster board of photos and symbolizations of their chosen individual to present to the class.

4. Required teacher preparation/materials needed:

- *The Seven Resiliencies* handout
- *Resiliency Worksheet*
- Access to research tools (media center, Internet, etc.)
- Paper, pens, pencils
- Student journals

Instructional Plan

	Procedure	Accommodations/ Modifications
Time	<p>Setting the Stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the meaning of resiliency with the students. Ask students what they <i>think</i> makes someone resilient. Write down student-driven definitions/brainstorm chart on the board. Discuss the definition of resiliency with the students. <p>Core Learning Activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute and discuss The Seven Resiliencies handout. Ask students for examples of how a person shows the strengths on the list. Ask the class: We often think of heroes as people who show great resilience. Can you think of anybody in history, anyone famous, or even anyone you know who has shown great resilience in the face of great challenges? Keep a list of student responses on the board. You might offer the following additional examples: Oprah Winfrey, Lance Armstrong, Helen Keller, Nelly McClung, Harriet Tubman, Terry Fox, and so on. Ask students to select a name from the list or identify another hero to study. Distribute the Resiliency Worksheet and explain: Use this worksheet to analyze your selected person's life and accomplishments in terms of the seven resiliencies. Consider the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did he/she demonstrate some of the resiliencies? Did he/she have many of the strengths? Which was strongest? What did this person do or say to illustrate, or prove to you, that he or she demonstrated a resiliency? Allow time for students to use research materials to find information. When they have completed their worksheets, gather as a class and share. When everyone has had a chance to share, have them write a response to the following questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which of the seven resiliencies do you think you have? How have you demonstrated any or all of them in your life? (Note: This can be a journal or homework assignment.) Decide if this will be shared with others or not. <p>Lesson Consolidation/Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wrap up the activity by asking: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are we all resilient at one time or another? 	<p>Allow students to use computer lab during allotted class time so students who do not have computers at home can have an opportunity to research.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How can we keep ourselves resilient so we can feel like we are secure throughout life?• Ask them how they plan to improve these resiliencies.	
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Adapted from: Wolin, S., & Wolin, S. (2010). *The Resilient Self: How Survivors of Troubled Families Rise Above Adversity*. New York City, NY: Random House.

7 RESILIENCIES Handout

Resiliency	Description
1. INSIGHT	Having <i>insight</i> means asking questions of yourself, even when the questions are difficult. If you answer honestly, you can learn and move forward. Having insight helps you understand the problem and how to best solve it. Insight helps you analyze the situation from as many perspectives as you can.
2. INDEPENDENCE	Showing <i>independence</i> means keeping a healthy distance between yourself and other people so you can think things through and do what is best for you. It also means knowing how to step away from people who seem to cause trouble or make things worse by their words or actions.
3. RELATIONSHIPS	Building <i>relationships</i> means finding connections with people that are healthy for both of you and keeping those relationships growing.
4. INITIATIVE	Taking the <i>initiative</i> means taking control of the problem and working to solve it. It means asking questions of yourself and answering them as honestly as you can, so you can move past a sticky situation. Sometimes people who take initiative become the leaders in activities and teamwork.
5. CREATIVITY	Using <i>creativity</i> requires that you use your imagination or resourcefulness to express your feelings, thoughts, and plans in some unique way. Remember that when you make something happen, it shows resiliency of spirit and a positive attitude.
6. HUMOUR	<i>Humour</i> is the ability to find something funny in a situation, even when things seem really bad. Humor often gives you the perspective needed to relieve tension and make the situation better.
7. MORALITY	Being a person of <i>morality</i> means knowing the difference between right and wrong and being willing to choose and stand up for what is right.

(Wolin & Wolin, 2010)

Date: _____

Name: _____

Resiliency Worksheet

Name of famous hero: _____

In the boxes below, describe how your chosen “hero” demonstrates or demonstrated any of the seven resiliencies listed.

Insight:

Independence:

Relationships:

Initiative:

Creativity:

Humour:

Morality:

School Performance

Children and youth in foster care face significant barriers to positive educational experiences and academic achievement (Munson & Freundlich, 2008, p. 1).



- Gustavsson and MacEachron (2012) note that “foster children are at an elevated risk for a number of negative educational outcomes: low graduation rates, special education enrollment, grade retention, school behavioral problems, poor academic performance, behavioral health challenges, and school mobility” (p. 83).

- School failure is associated with serious long-term negative consequences;
- Schools are a potential source of much needed stability and guidance for children who have been taken away from their homes;
- There are many practical options for improvement; and
- Wide-ranging remediation efforts have not yet been demonstrated to work.

(Ferguson & Wolkow, 2012).

Special Education

- A concerning educational issue for foster children is the overrepresentation in special education programs.
- Approximately 40% to 47% of foster youth receive special education services and they are significantly more likely to be identified as having emotional disturbances and physical disabilities as compared to non-foster youth (Stone, D'Andrade, & Austin, 2007).
- Available findings suggest that youth in foster care receiving special education services experience lower educational achievement (e.g., Geenen & Powers, 2006; Smithgall, Gladden, Yang, & Goerge, 2005) and poorer transition outcomes once they grow older and leave the education system compared to youth in foster care who do not receive special education services.
- 82% of children in care have diagnosed special needs.
(Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2011). An Agenda for Children and Youth: Pre-Budget Consultation.

Fostering Success

- All individuals are all born with the instinctual need to seek, nurture, and form attachments with individuals who they can depend on (Stinehart, Scott, & Barfield, 2012).
- Secure attachments with guardians are needed in the lives of foster children as well as positive bonding experiences with teachers in the school system.
- Bomber (2007) recommends that children who have experienced significant disrupted attachments early in life need a relationship with a key adult in the school who can help them manage their feelings by offering sensitivity and empathy.
- Schofield and Beek (2005) found that the educational and social outcomes of children who had caregivers who were able to reflect on the child's thoughts, feelings, and behaviour were significantly improved.

Foster children's behaviours in school might be driven by a pervasive sense of shame that Hughes observes is common to many foster children (2006).

Shame is “an acutely painful emotion that is typically accompanied by a sense of shrinking or of being small and by a sense of worthlessness and powerlessness”
(Tangney & Dearing, 2003, p. 18).

- Shame often leads to a desire to escape or to hide. When this is not possible, an individual is likely to lash out in a state of rage (Woodier, 2011). Woodier (2011) goes on to say that when shamed, the young person experiences himself as bad, unlovable, and worthless.
- Hughes (2006) also observes “shame is accompanied not only by anger but also by fear, the fear of being rejected and abandoned. In anticipating rejection, the child may activate a strong defensive reaction” (p. 183).
- Hughes (2006) notes, “a child may defend himself against such feelings of worthlessness through anger, denial, and blaming others” (pp. 177-178).
- For such a young person, establishing a feeling of **emotional safety** is paramount (Woodier, 2011). Significantly, “a child suffering from a pervasive sense of shame is less likely to notice the effect of his behaviour on others, and in so doing is less likely to develop empathy” (Hughes, 2006, p. 184).
- This common and intense feeling of shame shared by foster children is important to be understood by those caring for them as well as teachers and other school staff.
- Many behaviours foster children exhibit can be explained by this “shame theory.”

Empathize

It is important for teachers to empathize with foster children and to encourage feelings of self-worth so they truly understand that they deserve successes in life. They need to feel worthy of rewards and positive reinforcement so they can work hard to achieve these benefits.

C O M M U N I C A T I O N

O P E N

- Open communication is important between foster children and teachers. Even though this task may take a considerable time to achieve, Geddes (2006) writes, “the task itself can be a bridge which links the teacher and pupil. Across this bridge the pupil experiences reliable interest and concern without feeling threatened by overwhelming feelings” (p. 74).
- Foster children, like all students, thrive when there is a connection and personal bond with their teachers. In order for all children to feel comfortable in the classroom, teachers need to work hard towards creating a positive relationship with their students. The student needs to know that teachers genuinely care.

✓ Schools and child welfare agencies need to work together in order to change the reality of education for foster children. Without consistent communication and cooperation related to the children’s best interests, foster children’s challenges in school will not be addressed or overcome.

Consistent and ongoing communication is something that revolves around the life of a foster child. There are many individuals in different agencies that a foster child comes into contact with on a regular basis. Apart from friends and peers, foster children need to communicate with their caseworker, their foster caregiver(s), their teachers, their family counselor, and, in most cases, their biological families on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, communication is an imperative skill to have in order for children in care to succeed in the welfare, education, and family systems. In the following lesson, communication is introduced to students. The concept of sending and receiving messages requiring two-way communication is outlined. Not only speaking, but also listening skills are also discussed. A great amount of pair and group work is instructed in this lesson in order for students to collaborate and practice their communication skills one-on-one. Also included are tips and strategies for good communication and listening skills.

Subject/Course: Health and Wellbeing
Grade level: Grade 4

Lesson Topic: Communication
Lesson Duration: 60 mins

1. Lesson Learning Goal(s) Key Question: What do I want students to know and be able to do?

Knowledge and Understanding / Thinking / Communication / Application

- To understand that good listening requires two-way communication – sending and receiving a message (knowledge).
- To have practiced using open questions and listening for feelings as well as facts (skills).
- To discuss and review what good listening skills are and how it feels when someone doesn't demonstrate that they are listening to what you are saying (attitudes/values).

2. Assessment Key Question: How will I know each student has learned the concept(s)?

a) Indicator(s) of Lesson Learning Goals:

- Students are able to understand the meaning of communication and how it involves two people sending and receiving messages.
- Students are able to work individually and in pairs to complete the activities.
- Students are able to reflect on the activities in their journals.

b) Assessment Strategies and Tools: (Key Question: What will students be doing and what will I use to assess learning?)

- Anecdotal notes – are students focused and paying attention to the lesson?
- Checklist – are students able to work effectively in pairs while staying on task?

3. Differentiated Instruction Key Question: What will I do to assist individual learners or provide enrichment for others?

Accommodation and/or modification:

For younger grades – instead of breaking students in groups, role-play what different communication looks and sounds like.

For older grades – instead of splitting the class into two groups for the second activity, have them come up with their own scenarios and act them out in front of the class. What do good communication skills look like, what do they not look like?

Extension:

Have students take home start activity and share with their parents, guardians, and, friends. Share and demonstrate how communication takes two sides: the message giver and receiver. A good example and reminder for students who struggle with good communication practices.

Have them share the handout with their family to go over tips and strategies for good communication.

4. Required teacher preparation/materials needed:

- Photocopies of worksheets
- Student journals

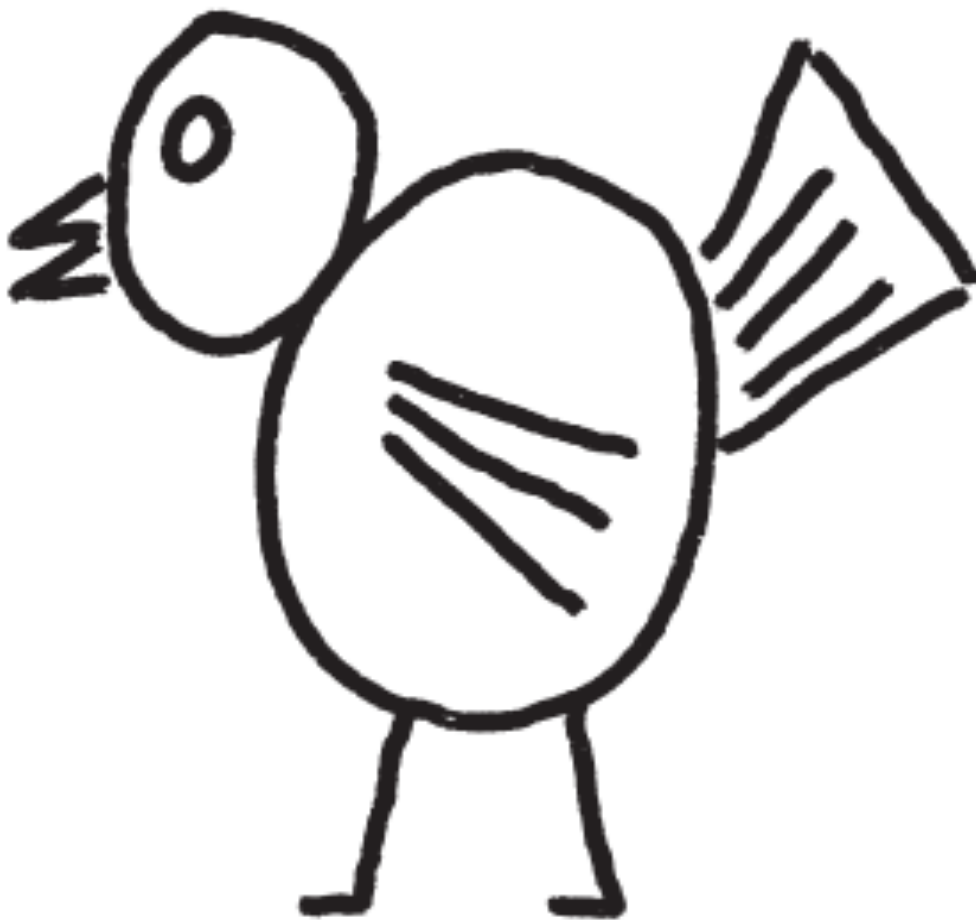
Instructional Plan

	Procedure	Activity
Time	<p>Setting the Stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briefly introduce the topic of communication by explaining that it involves two parts, speaking and listening, or in other words, sending and receiving a message. Sometimes we can “send” a message, but the other person does not “receive” it in the same way that it was sent. Why might that be? The other element in communication is the context in which the message is given. Context can mean the place or the person. Explain that today’s lesson will use a few exercises to demonstrate how this works. An example of how context affects how a message is received is when someone has told us something about someone that affects our view of them. When that person speaks to us, we “filter” what they say through the impression that we already have of them. <p>Core Learning Activity:</p> <p>INTRO ACTIVITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate that communication is a two-way process. Explain: You are going to draw a picture. You want to know what it is but need to listen to my instructions. You may not ask me any questions during the exercise. Read out the instructions to describe the picture of the chicken. Students should work on their own to draw what they hear, but may not ask questions. Use the big picture of the chicken to show students what they should have drawn. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask students what made the task difficult. Reflect that it is because you can't check the information you are hearing. Good listening needs two-way communication. <p>LISTENING EXERCISE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In pairs students should practice their listening skills. Hand out the photocopies of the cards “A” and “B” and tell the students to follow the instructions. Allow 5 minutes for them to do the exercise, and then draw the class back together to discuss. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did it feel doing the exercise? How did you know they weren't listening? Reflect that body language (the way you sit, eye contact), asking questions; checking you have understood, are all part of good communication. <p>OPEN/CLOSED COMMUNICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask what the difference is between an open and closed question. Explain: An open question starts with, for example, what, why, how. A closed question is a question that needs only a one-word 	<p>Do not show the image of the object until after the activity</p>

	<p>answer, like yes or no. In this exercise you will practice a conversation and you are not allowed to use a closed question.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the same pairs, follow the instructions for “As” and “Bs.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ask “As” to give examples of open questions that they used. ○ What is the difference between “open” and “closed” questions? ○ How did “Bs” feel when “As” used open questions? ○ In which scenario did they find it easier to communicate to the other person? Why? <p>Lesson Consolidation/Reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing discussion and feedback. Check students understand what emotional health is. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recap on the lessons learned during the lesson. ○ Ask if they have any questions about the lesson. ○ Ensure that they know where to go for help either in school or out of school if they want to talk further about any issues raised. ○ Handout “Tips for Good Listening and Communication Skills” sheets to take home. 	
<p>Adapted from: Communication & Listening Skills (2006, October). In <i>DEAL: Developing Emotional Health and Learning</i>. Retrieved September 15, 2013, from http://www.samaritans.org/sites/default/files/kcfinder/files/DEAL/DEAL-A2%20Communication.pdf</p>		

STARTER ACTIVITY

- ❖ Draw an egg shape
- ❖ Draw a circle touching the egg shape
- ❖ Draw a small circle inside the circle you have just drawn
- ❖ Draw three straight lines inside the egg shape
- ❖ Draw two small lines coming out of the circle that touch at one end
- ❖ Repeat just below
- ❖ Draw two longer lines coming out of the egg shape
- ❖ Draw a line to join up these two lines
- ❖ Draw three straight lines inside the shape you have just created
- ❖ Draw two lines coming out of the bottom of the egg shape
- ❖ Draw two short lines coming out of the lines you have just drawn



Core Activity Classroom Exercise

Listening practice

Photocopy this sheet, and cut out the following cards. The class will work in pairs. Half of the class will be “As” and half will be “Bs.”

Listening practice: Instructions for As

Describe your last holiday to person B, or an event that you have been to recently. They will have to listen for the next five minutes.

Instruction for group B: You are a parent/guardian and your child comes home late after curfew. You want to know where person B was, and why they were late. You may only ask **open-ended questions** to get your responses.

Examples: Where were you?, What were you doing?, Why are you late?, Why didn't you call?, Who were you with?

OPEN/CLOSED QUESTIONS:

Instruction for group A: You are a parent/guardian and your child comes home late after curfew. You want to know where person B was and why they were late. You may only ask **closed-ended questions** to get your responses.

Examples: You know you are late, right?, Were you at someone's house?, Did you even think of calling?, Do you know how worried I get?

Tips for Good Communication & Listening Skills

<p>React and offer short words of encouragement:</p> <p>Show you are listening by nodding, and using short words - "mmm," "yes," "I see." "Go on."</p>	<p>Be sympathetic:</p> <p>"That must have been difficult," "Sounds like you've had a bad time" can help.</p>	<p>Choose an open question:</p> <p>Use questions starting with how, what, where, why, and who to encourage your friend to talk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What that was like? ✓ How do you feel about ...? ✓ What's happening now?
<p>Avoid closed questions:</p> <p>These are questions that only need one-word answers. They can stop a conversation flowing.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Are you upset? - Yes. ✓ Do you think you'll tell her or not? - Not. 	<p>Don't be afraid to ask:</p> <p>If they don't want to talk about it they will say so.</p>	<p>Show positive body language:</p> <p>The way you sit or stand can encourage someone to feel relaxed around you, and know that you want to hear what they have to say.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Be relaxed but show you are concentrating on what is being said. For example, relax your arms, don't cross them. Sitting slightly forward, and tilting your head means you are listening. ✓ Lots of eye contact, but don't stare. ✓ Smile and nod where appropriate.
<p>Listen and look for clues:</p> <p>What are the facts? What else might they mean? What have they been feeling? Did they mention something in passing which they are hoping you'll ask more about?</p>	<p>Do you know what I mean?</p> <p>Don't tell someone that you understand, show them! Do this by summarizing what they've said. If you don't understand, ask them to clarify.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ So do you mean....? ✓ If I'm hearing you right what you're saying is... 	<p>What to say when someone gets upset...</p> <p>Don't try to say too much or solve their problems; sometimes just listening or even just being there with them is enough.</p>

Adapted from: (Communication & Listening Skills, 2006)

Conclusion

- By recognizing the complexity of adverse backgrounds of foster children, the negative effects of attachment disorder and socioemotional health problems, effective programs for this population of children can be developed and advanced.
- Children in care share adverse backgrounds that substantially increase their chances of developing attachment disorders and behavioural and developmental problems.
- It is the responsibility of foster care parents, teachers, and child welfare workers to work together to form proactive relationships, secure attachments, model prosocial and emotional behaviour, and build resiliency for children in care.
- It is important to remember that foster children represent a unique population of youth with unique backgrounds who possess distinct needs and different strengths that must be recognized by adults who care for and work with them.
- Foster children need to be granted equal opportunities to grow and succeed as other children do in schools.

Teachers and foster parents need to give optimal support and maintain high expectations in order to motivate these children and give them a sense of hope.

- Foster parents, teachers, and other school staff must be educated and aware of the challenges foster children face in order to help make their education experience more constructive and successful.
- If all individuals working with foster children share the ultimate goal of helping these kids recognize their identities, moral values, problem solving skills, and social competencies in order to increase their resiliency, changes can be made.
- It takes one teacher, one foster parent, or one caseworker to change the life of a foster child. It takes an individual who cares enough to develop a special bond and attachment to these children to give them the love and support necessary for them to succeed in all avenues of life.
- All children, despite their adversity, have the capacity to build internal and external sources of resiliency. This resiliency is best fostered in a supportive and caring environment.

The majority of foster youth are school-aged children. School is undeniably the place where they spend most of their waking hours. According to Munson & Freundlich, (2008) “positive school experiences can enhance children’s well-being, help them make more successful transitions to adulthood, and increase the likelihood that they can achieve personal fulfillment and economic self-sufficiency and contribute positively to society” (p. 2).



It is in the schools and up to staff and teachers to take advantage of this time to help develop foster children's social skills, problem-solving skills, competency, attachments with peers and others, and resiliency in order for them to have a chance at 'beating the odds.'

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CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter will present a summary of the project. It will consist of an overview of the main issues and rationale that established a need for *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators*. Included will also be an overview of the experts' review, positive elements of the handbook, areas that required improvement, practical uses for the handbook, and implications for theory, practice, and further research. The chapter will conclude with closing remarks.

The research project and resulting handbook entitled, *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators* addressed two major goals; (a) to identify the unique backgrounds of foster children and their adverse outcomes on their lives; and (b) to develop a practical resource for teachers. First, with half a million children currently in care, approximately 71% of those being school aged, it is imperative that the educational outcomes for these youths improve (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2008). Most foster children spend the majority of their waking hours in school, making this an opportune environment to build the skills necessary for them to lead successful lives.

Second, attachment disorder is prevalent among foster children, as their primary attachment with their biological caregiver has been broken when removed by the social work agency. Furthermore, many foster children will experience multiple placements and several temporary relationships, potentially preventing them from forming secure attachments that are crucial for developmental health (Bowlby, 1982). With this understanding, teachers can play a critical role in the lives of foster children by forming positive bonds or attachments with them and being a consistent adult figure in their lives.

Third, simply put, resiliency is recognized as a capacity that allows a person to prevent, minimize, or overcome the damaging effects of adversity (R. Gilligan, 2009). Resiliency is an outcome produced by the following personal traits: social competency, problem-solving skills, autonomy, optimism, and ability to recruit social support (Craven & Lee, 2010). These skills are most developed in a social setting, school being an effective place to build these various skills and attributes.

Fourth, children and youth in foster care face significant barriers to positive educational experiences and academic achievement (Munson & Freundlich, 2008, p. 1). Because children in foster care lack parents to advocate on their behalf, and with poor achievement outcomes of this population, it is critical that public schools and child welfare agencies work together to develop formal procedures for supporting the educational functioning of foster youth (Zetlin et al., 2006a).

Last, according to Munson & Freundlich (2008), “positive school experiences can enhance children’s well-being, help them make more successful transitions to adulthood, increasing the likelihood that they can achieve personal fulfillment and economic self-sufficiency and contribute positively to society” (p. 2). Thus, a handbook was designed to specifically address the gap in the literature and address the need for facilitating teachers’ understanding of foster children’s unique learning and developmental needs. By providing a preliminary resource to frontline practitioners who interact on a daily basis with foster children, teachers can be active agents in changing the often-negative educational outcomes of children in care.

Summary of the Development of the Handbook

The development of the handbook was preceded by an exhaustive search of the literature in the areas of education and social work concerning children in care. The purpose of the review was to determine if a need existed for the increased awareness of the unique lives and needs of foster children as well as specific instruction and resources in primary classrooms across North America. The literature review clearly established that a dearth of literature exists that clearly addresses the need for specialized teacher knowledge and practices to support foster care children in the classroom context.

Once a need for the project was established, a critical analysis of the literature was conducted to prioritize the most important and relevant information regarding foster children and their backgrounds, socioemotional development, and behaviour/development issues. Additionally, the literature resources were mined for specific teaching strategies that improve the lives and educational outcomes of foster children. A professional development handbook to support teachers' knowledge of foster children, their lives, and how to work with them in their classrooms resulted from this review process. The information contained in the handbook was limited to academic references.

Following the critical analysis of literature and compilation of relevant material for the information portion of the professional development handbook, teaching resources such as lesson plans, teaching strategies, activities, and handouts were generated. This portion of the project was to ensure practicality of the handbook. Resources were crafted around the themes of building attachment and a trusting bond, sharing feelings, dealing with emotions, increasing social skills, behaviour management, promoting resiliency, and

effective communication. The crafted as well as selected lesson plans, activities, and handouts were chosen with the unique needs of foster children in mind. They targeted issues such as attachment disorder, behaviour issues, and inhibited socioemotional development. Moreover, each lesson or activity addressed and focused on building foster children's skills in communication, resiliency, and social and emotional competency.

The next stage of the project involved expert evaluation of the handbook. Three experts in the field of social work were asked to review the content, relevancy, effectiveness, and utility of the information presented in the handbook. The final handbook was adapted based on the expert insights and “insider perspectives” of the three experts.

Listening to Experts

After being provided with an opportunity to review the handbook, the experts shared their insights with me informally in conversations. The purpose of the conversations was to determine whether the handbook would meet the informational needs for an educator with a foster child in his or her classroom. The feedback attained from these conversations was used to improve the teacher handbook and develop the final copy. The following themes emerged from these conversations and were used to adapt the handbook: (a) positive elements of the handbook, (b) areas that required improvement, (c) connections made to current practice, and (d) practical uses of the handbook.

Positive Elements of the Handbook

In general, the handbook was well received by the experts, and the three experts indicated that the handbook had a number of “key features” that would be useful for

primary teachers. The experts valued that the handbook was concise and written in language that would be easily understood by practitioners. The three individuals commented favorably on the design of the handbook, the presentation of the information, and the clarity of essential key messages.

Frequently mentioned by the experts was how the information in the handbook focused on the overall notion that foster children are just like any other child. Foster care children have the same needs as other children; this is a need for care, love, encouragement, motivation, and high levels of education. All three experts claimed that professionals should remain mindful all that all children need to be ensured success. All children are entitled to the same level and quality of education presented by schools and teachers. The experts found this theme evident throughout the handbook.

A frequent topic of discussion among the reviewing experts was the issue surrounding special education and behaviour management. The experts stressed the fact that many children in care are in need of special education; however, the process of establishing this need is often not thorough enough. In Ontario, 82% of children in care have diagnosed special needs (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, 2011). This staggering statistic makes clear the importance of special education programs and resources. Furthermore, experts commented on the helpful nature of the behaviour management charts as the information was clear and to the point. The points in the charts are easy to follow and are good reminders on how to manage difficult behaviour in the classroom.

Areas That Required Improvement

The reviewing experts also provided suggestions on areas of improvement for the handbook. First, two of the experts found the handbook to be too lengthy and heavily research based, noting that the resources were “not so teacher reading friendly.” One expert recommended the use of an appendix section in lieu of text contained within the main handbook section. However, much of the information was deemed crucial, and the intent of the handbook is to act as a clearinghouse of much needed knowledge for teachers. Thus, the information remained within the main document and, to enhance readability, diagrams, graphs, and tables were also included with information reconfigured for easier consumption and referencing.

Another area of improvement suggested by one of the experts was to include more Canadian or Ontario statistics. Much of the research found and included in the handbook was conducted in the United States and they found that by incorporating more Canadian statistics, it would make the handbook more relevant to Ontario teachers. Much of the research and qualitative studies were done in the United States; there was little research on foster children done in Canada. This expert was able to suggest a social work database to find some Ontario statistics, which were included in the final draft of the handbook.

Finally, since three experts reviewing the handbook were from a social work background, they wished to see more information about the social welfare system in the handbook. Each of them clearly stated the importance of teachers and schools having information about the different roles being played in the social work agency. They all voiced concern that not many people are educated on the different roles people play when

working with children. For example, when there is a child under temporary care, that child will have assigned a child protection worker and a family social worker. If they are under permanent care, they may have fewer or more workers assigned to their case depending on the circumstances. The experts found it important for teachers to know that one child may have one or more workers who directly deal with the child. They find that many teachers get frustrated or confused when they are approached by several individuals concerning the child. They also felt it necessary to include the difference between a “child under temporary care” and a “child under permanent care.” The biggest difference between these two types of foster children is that, in the former case, the child’s biological parents still have the final say on what the child does, and in the latter case, all the decisions concerning the child are made by the social work agency. This is critical for teachers to know when dealing with different players in the social work agency.

Practical Uses of the Handbook

All of the reviewing experts mentioned that they could see this handbook being a useful tool for educators with children in care in their classroom. They agreed that there is information crucial for educators to be aware of in order to help these children succeed in school. Overall, the experts felt the handbook included helpful strategies and tips when working with foster children and, as harsh as some information was, teachers need to be exposed to the reality of these children’s lives. Many people have preconceived notions about children in care and the agencies which are involved in these children’s lives. This handbook answers many questions a teacher would have concerning that child in his or her classroom. Even more important, they can access the strategies and tips found in the handbook to help the child succeed in school.

Implications for Theory

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory and Bandura's social cognitive theory served as the theoretical framework for this project. The ecological systems approach holds that the development of a human being reflects the influence of several environmental systems (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Furthermore, social cognitive theory of human behaviour is the importance of observing and modeling the behaviours, emotions, and reactions of others. Bandura's and Bronfenbrenner's theories both posit that human behaviour is learned observationally through modeling and is formed directly by the environment the individual is exposed to. In other words, people learn by observing others, with the environment, behaviour, and cognition all as the chief factors in influencing development (Santrock, 2008).

Important to note, both theories state that that learning is impacted by the interconnections between the person, behaviour, and the environment (Bandura, 1977). These three forces interact with each other and determine the person's performance. In the handbook, *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators*, teachers are guided to use the information provided, lesson plans, and activities to assist in recognizing all aspects of a foster child's life (person, behaviour, and environment), realizing the child as a whole. The importance of community agencies and family and peer interactions in working with foster children are rooted in Bandura's social cognitive theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory.

The success of a foster child depends upon this integrated systems approach. Important to note is that the teacher and education system are only one piece of the puzzle when working with children in care. It is critical for all the involved systems in the

child's life: education system, social work system, community, and family, to work together in the shared goal to help these children succeed in all areas of life.

Communication and the sharing of information and strategies between all systems are the key to this interagency goal.

Implications for Practice

The intent of the project was twofold: (a) to identify the unique backgrounds of foster children and their adverse outcomes on their lives; and (b) to develop a practical resource for teachers. The handbook was not intended to be a comprehensive resource or the sole source of support for teachers working with foster children in their classrooms. Rather, the handbook should help as a starting point to raise awareness and encourage the need for further teacher training on all aspects of social welfare and mental health. There is not often an intentional focus on foster children within teacher education training programs. Evidenced by my own experience, a special education course can be very generalist and involve minimal in-class hours. Perhaps faculties of education need to revisit special education courses to include more comprehensive, relevant, and an enlarged collection of information concerning a wider scope of children who require special needs.

There are three main implications for working with foster children. First, the evaluation of *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators* demonstrates that the information provided was relevant and practical. As discussed with experts in the field, this handbook provides a depiction of topics concerning children in care. The experts indicated that the handbook could be used as a good introduction or refresher and is easy to follow.

A second implication for practice is the functionality of the handbook. *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators* was created using current research, personal experiences, and data from experts in the field of social work. Discussing the handbook with the experts assessed whether the handbook would be useful and practical. Even though the experts had a variety of experiences and specialty in the field of social work and education, each indicated that the information, strategies, statistics, lesson plans, activities, and descriptions were easy to follow and believed they would be useful to educators. The information provided in the handbook entails background information, definitions of common terms, behaviour management strategies, information about socioemotional development, resiliency, and attachment disorder, and moreover, easy-to-implement lesson plans and activities. The experts determined that the handbook was practical and that the information provided was useful in classrooms and an addition to their previous knowledge about foster children. *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators* can be used as a beginning resource for teachers as well as act as a bridge between the two disciplines of teaching and social work.

The research project also implicates a need for further training, especially in preservice teacher training. Regardless of the grade taught, given the incidence of foster care children in the school-age years (National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, 2008), many educators will encounter foster children in their classrooms. In order to focus on the success of these children, teachers need to have a basic understanding of the histories, mental health concerns, and common behavioural and developmental disorders prevalent in this population of students.

New research across Ontario school boards has indicated that most teachers feel underprepared to help students with mental health problems (Boesveld, 2013). The results of the survey show teachers feel mental health is a real and pressing issue in their classrooms, with 92% of the participants saying they've had students struggling with mental health issues (Boesveld, 2013). While 97.4% of teachers surveyed felt it was part of their job to be aware of how to react and deal with a mental health problem in students, a staggering 93.3% did not feel their teacher training adequately prepared them to deal with the issue, according to the survey by Nipissing University PhD candidate Amy Andrews (Boesveld, 2013). This survey attests that preservice teaching programs need to focus core content on developing teacher candidates' knowledge of mental health, resiliency building, and creating learning environments that are integrated and accommodating of all children's unique needs.

Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators provides educators with basic information concerning foster children. In order to assist in providing and ensuring a positive school experience for children in care, educators must have a more in-depth understanding of the lives of these children. Workshops or professional development seminars run by social work agencies or by the school board would be beneficial for educators. Teachers learn a general overview of special education and behaviour disorders in their teacher educator training; however the lives of foster children are so complex and unique, it should be considered its own entity of knowledge. These workshops would enable teachers the opportunity to share ideas, strategies, and information they use in their classrooms. Strategies and lessons that are effective in positively working with children in care and children who may be at risk for

socioemotional, developmental, and behavioural disorders should be developed and shared in order to increase the success of these children in school.

Implications for Further Research

This section will provide suggestions for further research for researchers interested in further developing *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators* or a similar resource.

First, in order to address the limitations associated with the absent sample of participants in this research, future research should include input from a larger number of both social work experts and foster parents along with teachers and, if confidentiality were not an issue, children in care themselves. This feedback will be important for both the preliminary research and need for this area of study, as well as the final product and end stages of development. This will also ensure that future resources are practical and helpful for a wide range of educators and school staff as well as foster parents.

Second, *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators* is written for elementary school teachers. Future research could aim to develop a handbook for secondary school teachers who are teaching children in care. The potential negative effects of being removed from their biological families and placed in temporary or permanent care could last a lifetime; foster care children have many particular needs at every age. As foster children enter secondary school, they often come into contact with a less structured, less supervised environment that can be very difficult for them to navigate. Secondary school teachers would benefit from a resource concerning supporting children in care as well.

Third, further research can be done on the collaboration and partnership of two main agencies present in the lives of foster care children, the education system and the social work system. As research and experts have mentioned, one of the main issues to date concerning the relationship between both parties is the lack of communication and knowledge of the roles each play. By acknowledging both agencies, and educating players on each individual's role, there would be far greater cooperation. This interagency knowledge, cooperation, and communication would undeniably have positive effects on the working relationship of the parties involved and, more important, positive effects on the children in care and their education.

Concluding Remarks

There were two major goals for this project: (a) to identify the unique backgrounds of foster children and their adverse outcomes on their lives; and (b) to develop a practical resource handbook to educate teachers about foster children to provide strategies for supporting their learning, ultimately contributing positively to their educational experience. To achieve these goals, *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators* was created. The handbook reviews the introduction, common histories of children in care, attachment disorder, socioemotional development, behaviour management, building resiliency, school performance, and fostering success for foster youth.

After the development of *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators*, three experts in the field of social work were asked to review the handbook and provide feedback and suggestions on relevance, efficiency, coherence, clarity, and aesthetics of the handbook. The responses of the reviewing individuals were

taken into account, and the final copy of *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators* was created. The results of the evaluations indicated that the handbook is a valuable resource for educators working with foster children. All three social work evaluators reported that the information in the handbook provided them with a helpful overview of all aspects of the lives of foster children.

In conclusion, the responses of the evaluators who reviewed this study indicate that this project produced an important and useful resource, *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators*. *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators* was developed and based in current research, theory, and in consideration of the advice given by experts in the field of social work. It is the hope of this researcher that educators will implement the knowledge gained and strategies outlined in *Foster Children in Education: Resource Handbook for Elementary Educators* in order to address the needs of students in care in order to increase the chance of their school success and future positive life outcomes.

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